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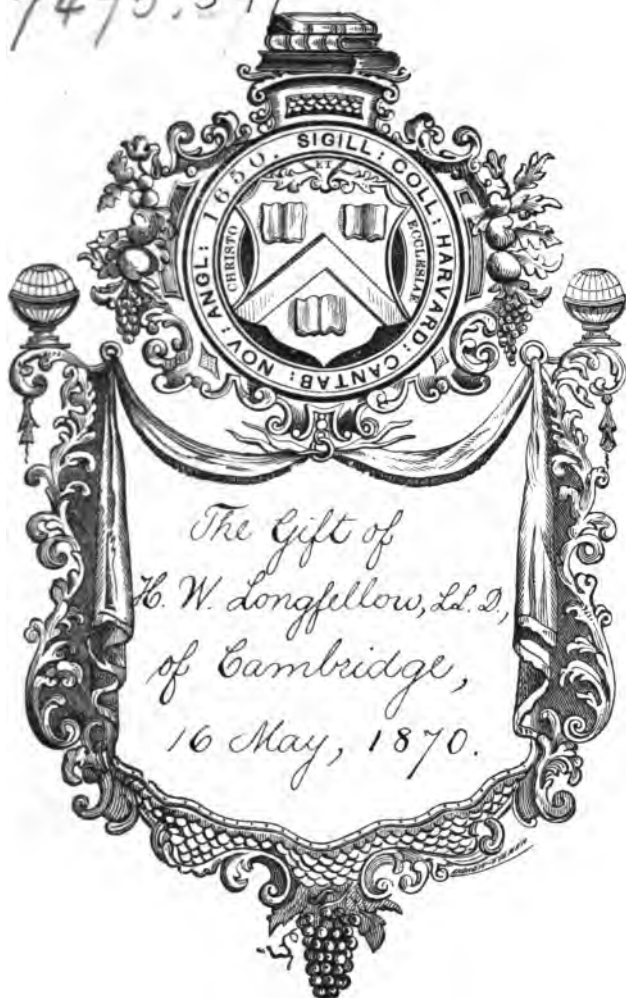
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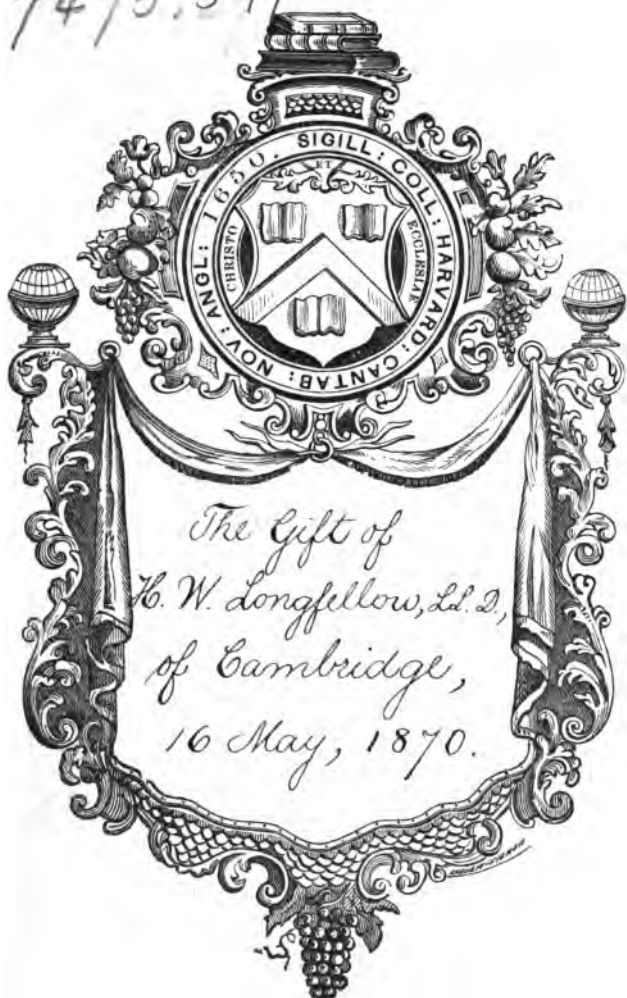
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LECTURE

ON THE

WRITINGS AND GENIUS OF BYRON,

DELIVERED BY

JOHN CLARK FERGUSON, ESQ.,

BEFORE THE

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LECTURE

ON THE GENIUS AND WRITINGS OF BYRON.

Before discoursing to you on the merits of Lord Byron's poetry, it may be well for us to enquire what is poetry. In answer to the question I shall give you the opinions of several eminent writers on the subject. Dr. Johnson was of opinion that "a poet is one whose business it is to examine, not the individual, but the species, to remark general properties and large appearances, not to number the streaks of the tulip, or describe the different shades of the verdure of the forest, but to exhibit in his portraits of nature such prominent and striking features, as shall recall the original to every mind." Bailey, the author of *Festus*, is of opinion that "a poet is one who feels great truths and utters them." Wordsworth in one of his essays depicts poetry as "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge, the impassioned expression, which is in the countenance of all science." "Poetry," says Shelley, "lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar things as if they were not familiar." Lord Byron himself said of poetry that it is "the feeling of a former world, and a future." Now it seems to me that there is truth in nearly all the remarks I have just read, more or less, and especially in what Dr. Johnson says; but if I were asked for my own opinion in the matter I would say that a poet is one who describes not only the beautiful, and sublime, but the true as well, both in nature and in thought and feeling, and out of the elements which he has to work upon, viz., those with which he is made conversant by the external senses, creates other scenes of beauty and sublimity, expressing all his ideas in more forcible and eloquent language than is to be met with in prose, in the pure acceptation of the word, not describing, as Dr. Johnson says, the details, but the broad characteristics

of everything. Take your own experience for example. Who among you has not heard some oration so powerfully and eloquently expressed that it has become heightened into poetry? Is it not commonly the case that a glowing and beautiful description is spoken of as being "quite poetical?"

I will now with your permission quote to you a few passages from the works of different poets illustrative of my opinion on the subject. How very poetic for example is Milton's "Ode on his Blindness!" he speaks of being

"Debarred from sight of vernal bloom and joy."

How poetic also is that passage in Rogers' "Pleasures of Memory" descriptive of a dog welcoming his master after a long absence!

"His faithful dog will tell his joy to each
With that mute eloquence which passes speech!"

How poetical also are these lines in the "Pleasures of Hope" descriptive of an Arctic scene!

"Cold on his midnight watch the breezes blow,
From wastes that slumber in eternal snow."

Here the mind at once pictures to itself a scene of wintry desolation as forcibly as any other set of words could have compelled it to do. The same poet also describes a social and domestic scene, the pleasures of the evening fireside, in the middle of winter—

"Trim the gay taper in his rustic dome,
And light the wintry paradise of home."

Can anything be more poetic than these lines? The mind at once revels in the delights of the domestic circle, and traces for itself images of fireside happiness and home, enlivened both by the interchange of frank, and affectionate feeling, and the play of harmless fun, amid the raging of the wintry elements. Of all poets, I have always been of opinion that Thomson, the author of "The Seasons," is one whose writings contain the pure spirit of poetry, as much, or more so, than those of any other poet. Speaking of green, he says,

"Thou smiling nature's universal robe,"

and addressing the sun he says,

"The very dead creation from thy touch the power assumes of mimic life."

How in these quotations we at once view nature in all the climax and redundancy of vegetation, and blooming in all the summer luxuriance of landscape loveliness! To conclude this part of my lecture, how poetical is the same poet's "Hymn on the Seasons!" for instance, when he says, addressing the Almighty,

"The rolling year is full of Thee."

Returning to the immediate subject of my lecture, I cannot but think that Byron possessed all the combined characteristics of a great poet more than almost any, excepting perhaps Milton and Shakspeare. His descriptions of natural scenery are conducted in a manner, which at once brings to the mind's eye either landscapes of surpassing loveliness, teeming with the sylvan beauty of the stream, or the meadow, or again others clothed in the wildness of a perpetual winter, where, to use his own glowing and poetic language,

"Falls the avalanche, that thunderbolt of snow."

How beautiful also are his descriptions of women, and his delineations of the female character, as in the case of Medora and Zuleika for instance! How clothed in an atmosphere of almost divine radiance when touched by his magic pencil appears the form of one of the softer sex, and how we recognize her, in the plenitude of her smiles of gentleness, of her blushes of purity, and her bursts of tenderness and affection, as the great earthly representative of Deity in His softer attributes! It has always seemed to me that Lord Byron's poems evince one attribute, the possession of which no other but myself ever gave him the credit of possessing, viz., an intimate knowledge of the feelings of human nature, and in the course of this lecture I shall endeavour to point out the passages shewing the attribute, when we come to them. There are interspersed throughout his poems passages which describe the workings of the human heart on great and trying occasions, touches of Nature delineating in eloquent, and vivid, and masterly strokes the play of her own wonderful mechanism. Great originality of thought is also one of Lord Byron's attributes, as I hope to point out to you, and his ideas are often clothed with a vigour, beauty, and electrifying greatness, which almost startles the mind by its grandeur, appealing to the intellect in language eloquent not only for its quality, but for its brevity. His descrip-

tions often fall upon us like a flash of lightning, instantaneous, and dazzling, and then all is over. Other writers frequently lean to the opposite extreme, our own Classic Addison for example (as Dr. Blair in his essay on rhetoric suggests) is remarkable more for his circumlocution than his brevity, and according to the opinion of that eminent critic, that very circumlocution is his fault, confessedly pure, and elegant as his style is. A word or two as regards the versification of the noble Lord. Grace, beauty, harmony, and refinement, combined with glowing vigour are its characteristics, as I hope to shew you before the conclusion of this lecture; and I know no poet who more brought the heroic couplet to the climax of perfection than he did, although he did not seem to be so well aware of the matter, but I think that the circumstance tends to shew the truth of the well-known adage, that "a poet is not the best judge of his own works." In the preface to "The Corsair" he says that the species of versification most after his own mind is the Spenserian stanza, that, you are probably aware, is the kind of verse in which "Childe Harold" is written. I must own, I disagree with him on the subject, not only am I of opinion that the heroic stanza is the most beautiful, and noblest kind of versification, both for descriptive, and didactic poetry, but that it was the kind in which the poet excelled the most, as I hope to shew you, as much as anything can be shewn to which you cannot apply mathematical demonstration, and which after all is but a matter of opinion. When wielded by the hands of Byron there was not only a beautiful harmony, but a masterly vigour, and an electrifying power in the heroic couplet, which no other author possessed to equal extent, although some have approached him, Pope, Rogers, and Campbell in particular; the two first equal him in the smoothness, grace, and beauty of their versification, but want his vigour; the latter, viz., Campbell, surpasses the other two in his approach to Byron, not only is I think his verse equally graceful, but also possessed of a great share of the same soul, and electrifying power.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, with your permission, I will read to you two extracts relatively to the subject, the first from Moore's "Life of Byron," the second from "Macaulay's Essays," and then I will take his principal poems, "Childe Harold," "The Corsair," "The Bride of Abydos," and "The Giaour," and quoting the principal passages in each, comment upon them. I now read you the extract from Moore—"Thus surrounded by

vexations, and thus deeply feeling them, it is not too much to say, that any other spirit but his own would have sunk under the struggle, and lost perhaps irrecoverably, that level of self-esteem which alone affords a stand against the shocks of fortune. But in him, furnished as was his mind with reserves of strength, waiting to be called out, the very intensity of the pressure brought relief by the proportionate reaction which it produced. Had his transgressions and frailties been visited with no more than their due portion of punishment, there can be no doubt that a very different result would have ensued. Not only would such an excitement have been insufficient to waken up the new energies still dormant in him, but that consciousness of his own errors, which was for ever living present in his mind, would, under such circumstances, have been left undisturbed by any unjust provocation, to work its usual provocation, and perhaps humbling influences on his spirit. But, luckily, as it proved for the further triumphs of his genius, no such moderation was exercised. The storm of invective raised around him, so utterly out of proportion to his offences, and the base calumnies which were everywhere heaped upon his name, left to his wounded spirit no other resource than in the same summoning up of strength, the same instinct of resistance to injustice which had first forced out the energies of his youthful genius, and was now destined to give a still bolder and loftier range to its powers. It was indeed, not without truth, said of him by Goëthe, that he was inspired by the Genius of Pain, for, from the first to the last of his agitated career, every fresh recruitment of his faculties was imbibed from that bitter source. His chief incentive, when a boy, to distinction was, as we have seen, that mark of deformity on his person, by an acute sense of which he was first stung into the ambition of being great, as with an evident reference to his own fate, he himself describes the feeling—

'Deformity is daring,
It is his essence to o'ertake mankind
By heart and soul, and make itself the equal,
Ay, the superior of the rest. There is
A spur in its halt movements, to become
All that the others cannot, in such things
As still as free to both to compensate
For Stepdame Nature's avarice at first.'

Then came the disappointment of his youthful passion, the lassitude and

remorse of premature excess, the lone friendliness of his entrance into life, and the ruthless assault upon his first literary efforts, all links in that chain of trials, errors, and sufferings, by which his great mind was gradually and painfully drawn out ; all bearing their respective shares in accomplishing that destiny which seems to have decreed that the triumphal march of his genius should be over the waste and the ruin of his heart ! He appeared, indeed, himself to have an instinctive consciousness that it was out of such ordeals his strength and glory were to arise, as his whole life was passed in courting agitation and difficulties ; and whenever the scenes around him were too tame to furnish such excitement, he flew to fancy or memory for 'thorns' whereon to 'lean his breast.'

And now with your permission, I intend reading you a few extracts from "Macaulay's Essays" relative to the subject, and I may add that I never yet have met with any criticism on the writings of the noble bard which have pleased me more or which appear to me more felicitous, or *a-propos* to the matter in question. "Lord Byron, like Mr. Wordsworth, had nothing dramatic in his genius. He was indeed the reverse of a great dramatist, the very antithesis to a great dramatist. All his characters, Harold looking on the sky, from which his country and the sun are disappearing together, the Giaour standing apart in the gloom of the side aisle, and casting a haggard scowl from under his long hood at the crucifix, and the oenser, Conrad leaning on his sword by the watch tower, Lara smiling on the dancers, Alp gazing steadily on the fatal cloud as it passes before the moon, Manfred wandering among the precipices of Berne, Azzo on the judgment seat, Ugo at the bar, Lambro frowning on the siesta of his daughter and Juan, and Cain presenting his unacceptable offering, are essentially the same. The varieties are varieties merely of age, situation, and outward show. It was in description, and meditation that Byron excelled. His manner is indeed peculiar, and is almost unequalled, rapid, sketchy, full of vigour ; the selection happy, the strokes few and bold. In spite of the reverence we feel for the genius of Mr. Wordsworth, we cannot but think that the minuteness of his descriptions often diminishes their effects. He has accustomed himself to gaze on nature with the eye of a lover, to dwell on every feature, and to mark every change of aspect. The proverb of old Hesiod that a half is often more than the whole, is eminently applicable to description. The policy of the Dutch who cut down most of the precious trees on the Spice Islands, in order to

raise the value of what remained, was a policy which poets would do well to imitate. It was a policy which no poet understood better than Lord Byron. Whatever his faults might be, he was never, while his mind retained its vigour, accused of prolixity. His descriptions, great as was their intrinsic merit, derived their principal interest from the feeling which always mingled with them. He was himself the beginning, the middle, and the end of all his own poetry, the hero of every tale, the chief object in every landscape. Harold, Lara, Manfred, and a crowd of other characters, were universally considered as loose incognitos of Byron; and there is every reason to believe that he meant them to be so considered. The wonders of the outer world, the Tagus with the mighty fleets of England riding on its bosom, the towers of Cintra overhanging the shaggy forest of cork-trees and willows, the glaring marble of Pentelicus, the banks of the Rhine, the glaciers of Clarens, the sweet lake of Leman, the dell of Egeria with its summer-birds, and rustling lizards, the shapeless ruins of Rome overgrown with ivy and wall-flowers, the stars, the sea, the mountains, all were mere accessories, the back ground to one dark and melancholy figure. Never had any writer so vast a command of the whole eloquence of scorn, misanthropy, and despair! That Marah was never dry. No art could sweeten, no draughts could exhaust, its perennial waters of bitterness. Never was there such variety in monotony as that of Byron. From maniac laughter to piercing lamentation, there was not a single note of human anguish of which he was not master. Year after year, and month after month, he continued to repeat that to be wretched is the destiny of all; that to be eminently wretched is the destiny of the eminent; that all the desires by which we are cursed lead alike to misery, if they be not gratified, to the misery of disappointment, if they are gratified, to the misery of satiety. His heroes are men who have arrived at the same goal of despair by different roads, who are sick of life, supported in their anguish only by the force of their will, and who to the last defy the whole power of earth and heaven. He always described himself as a man of the same kind with his favourite creations, as a man whose heart had been withered, whose capacity for happiness was gone, and could not be restored, but whose invincible spirit dared the worst that could befall him here, or hereafter."

And now I beg to call your attention to "Childe Harold." This poem, as I suppose many of you are aware, is the narrative of the poet's

pilgrimage through Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and Greece, abounding with his reflections both upon the wonders of nature in scenery, and the remains of art in sculpture and architecture, it is written in the Spenserian stanza, called so from Spenser, the originator, and consisting in each verse of nine lines, many of them rhyming alternately. It cannot but be observed by the reader of "Childe Harold" that that very egotistical spirit alluded to by Macaulay, whose remarks I have just quoted, is remarkably prevalent in the poem, and indeed more observable in that production than in any other of the noble Lord. The character of "Childe Harold" is that of a person satiated with pleasure, and groaning under the burden of *ennui*, tired of the world, and distrustful of his fellow-man, but deriving enjoyment to some extent from visiting foreign climes. There is no doubt whatever but that Byron had none other than himself in view, when he conceived the character. This frame, the result of his own wayward, but generous temper, is much to be regretted, as it cannot be denied that he was possessed of many noble virtues, which, if he had been properly schooled, would have made him an ornament to society, instead of being the misanthrope which he undoubtedly was. The following stanza from the poem, original and eloquent certainly, but wild and eccentric shall at once illustrate what I have said :—

"Self-exiled Harold wanders forth again,
With nought of hope left, but with less of gloom;
The very knowledge that he lived in vain,
That all was over on this side the tomb,
Had made despair a smilingness assume,
Which, though 'twere wild, as on the plunder'd wreck
Some mariners would gladly meet their doom
With draughts intemperate on the sinking deck,
Did he inspire a cheer, which he forbore to check."

One of the most remarkable passages in the poem is that which describes the night before the battle of Waterloo. You are most of you aware it is said that on the eve of that celebrated battle a ball was held in Brussels, and that many of the officers were engaged in the mazes of the dance, when the first cannons were heard. Byron's lines are among the most celebrated in the poem of "Childe Harold," and the strokes they contain are as usual with him, few, but bold and electrifying. I now give you them—

"There was a sound of revelry by night;
 And Belgium's capital had gather'd then
 Her beauty and her chivalry, and bright
 The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men;
 A thousand hearts beat happily, and when
 Music arose with its voluptuous swell,
 Soft eyes look'd love to eyes that spake again,
 And all went merry as the marriage bell,
 But hark! hush! a deep sound strikes like a rising knell.

"Did you not hear it? No; 'twas but the wind,
 Or the car rattling on the stony street;
 On with the dance! let joy be unconfined,
 No sleep till morn, when Youth and Pleasure meet,
 To chase the glowing hours with flying feet—
 But hark! that heavy sound breaks in once more,
 As if the clouds its echo would repeat;
 And nearer, clearer, deadlier than before,
 Arm! Arm! it is, it is, the cannon's opening roar."

By the way I have heard it denied that ever the ball to which Lord Byron alludes took place; be it so, if the rumour of such a thing having taken place had not been circulated, we never should have had the fine lines I have just quoted. Among the countries and objects of interest in them which are mentioned in "Childe Harold," Greece, and Italy, with their concomitant works of art occupy the principal part of the poem, and I will now with your permission quote to you the principal lines in which he apostrophizes the former, passages from which are perhaps as frequently mentioned as any among the writings of the noble Lord.

"Fair Greece, sad relic of departed worth,
 Immortal, though no more; though fallen, great!
 Who now shall lead thy scattered children forth,
 And long accustomed bondage uncreate?
 Not such thy sons who whilom did await,
 The hopeless warriors of a willing doom,
 In bleak Thermopylæ's sepulchral strait—
 Oh! who that gallant spirit shall resume,
 Leap from Eurotas' banks, and call thee from the tomb?

"Spirit of freedom! when on Phyle's brow
 Thou sat'st with Thrasybulus and his train,
 Could'st thou forbode the dismal hour which now
 Dims the green beauties of the Ætlic plain?
 Not thirty tyrants now enforce the chain,
 But every carl can lord it o'er thy land;
 Nor rise thy sons, but idly rail in vain,
 Trembling beneath the scourge of Turkish hand,
 From birth till death enslaved; in word, in deed, in unman'd.

"Hereditary bondsmen! know ye not
 Who would be free themselves must strike the blow?
 By their right arms the conquest must be wrought!
 Will Gaul or Muscovite redress ye? no!
 True, they may lay your proud despoilers low,
 But not for you will Freedom's altars flame.
 Shades of the Helots! triumph o'er your foe!
 Greece! change thy lords, thy state is still the same;
 Thy glorious day is o'er, but not thine years of shame."

Among these verses how dignified and noble is the allusion to the palmy days of Greece, when she was at the climax of her renown among the nations of the world, developing in her glorious constitution the spirit of freedom in all its various phases, and presenting a singular contrast to her present fallen and degraded condition. How particularly apt also is the allusion to the defence made by the Greeks at the celebrated straits of Thermopylæ, where a scanty band of 300 opposed the millions led on by the Persian King, and nearly all perished to a man in the defence of their country; all praise be given them, but at the same time the event cannot be said to have been one unparalleled in history, for whose British blood does not boil within him at the mention of an event which occurred in the Crimea? not much more than a year ago, I mean the cavalry charge at Balaclava, when a small band of 600 British heroes devoted themselves to almost certain destruction in opposition to the aggressive and tyrannical power of Russia? Well may we be proud of our countrymen! The poet proceeds to say—

"Yet are thy skies as blue, thy crags as wild,
 Sweet are thy groves, and verdant are thy fields,
 Thine olive ripe as when Minerva smiled,
 And still his horned wealth Hymittus yields,
 There the blithe bee his fragrant fortress builds,
 The freeborn wanderer of thy mountain air;
 Apollo still thy long, long summer gilds,
 Still in his beam Mendell's temples glare;
 Art, Glory, Freedom fail, but Nature still is fair."

We cannot but feel the power and truthfulness of these beautiful lines, which so aptly apostrophize Greece once so splendid, and renowned, but now alas! so far fallen. The period to which the poet most particularly alludes is the age of Pericles, which took place soon after the battle of Marathon. This victory to which also Byron afterwards alludes was one of the most splendid in the annals of the world, and took place A.C. 490. In that battle the Greeks under Miltiades defeated the much greater forces

of Persia under Xerxes, and the achievement of that glorious event was the commencement of the most splendid epoch in Grecian history, viz., the age when Pericles was at the head of the Athenian commonwealth, then existed the most truly patriotic spirit in Greece, and then, (shewing the common origin of all noble springs of action in the human mind,) also flourished the fine arts, and literature, and philosophy, in the climax of their splendour.

The cause of the decline of these is thus commented on in a work in Constable's Miscellany entitled "The history of Sculpture, Painting, and Architecture." I may add that I think the extract not out of place here, as the decline in Greece of the fine arts and their mother Freedom occupies a very considerable place in the poem of "Childe Harold," and may be said to be the burden of the poet's song. The extract is as follows, "We would not be understood as here maintaining a respectable, and amiable, but unfounded theory, that the fine arts have never flourished excepting under popular governments, nor that they ceased with such forms in Greece. In this more than any walk of genius, is the active encouragement of the supreme power indispensable to excellence. But never can the arts of Taste flourish in true grandeur, where patriotism, and popular feeling are not the paramount, or at least, the apparently paramount principles of the times, and source of their peculiar cultivation. The Arts themselves must be essentially free; they must likewise derive their quickening inspiration from a national sentiment of interest and country. Pisistratus and Pericles, we have seen while rulers of Athens, were but superintendents of the arts, in their application to public purposes, in unison with public will, and in obedience to public approval. Even Phidias prepared with trembling anxiety to receive the award of merit from the voice of his fellow-citizens; and only on the supposition that they were to undergo the ordeal of a close inspection before being placed in their destined situation, can we account for the exquisite finish of the Elgin marbles, even in parts not exposed to the effects of climate. Only when the purity of this source of honour was contaminated, did art fall, never to rise again. Not till every institution belonging to the republican ages of Greece; not till every sentiment of a generous kind had been trampled upon; not till the Olympic games ceased, till the physical education and martial games of the youth were neglected, till the art, separated from national polity, became dependant on the caprice of individuals, till there was no longer public spirit, nor

patriotic feeling ; not till all that creates and endears the name of country had sunk beneath a foreign yoke or domestic thralldom, did Greece cease to produce artists."

In his tour through the principal countries of Europe, Byron thus describes the Alps in a spirit akin to the grandeur of the subject, and in a truly original and poetic train of thought—

" Above me are the Alps,
The palaces of nature, whose vast walls
Have pinnacled in clouds their snowy scalps,
And throned Eternity in icy halls
Of cold sublimity, where forms and falls
The avalanche, the thunderbolt of snow !
All that expands the spirit, yet appals,
Gather around these summits, as to shew
How Earth may pierce to Heaven, yet leave vain man below."

I may mention that in the year 1854 I had the opportunity of personally viewing these wonders of nature as described by the poet, owing to a journey which I made from Geneva into Italy, through the celebrated pass of the Simplon. This is a road of about 25 miles in length, made by Napoleon to expedite the journey from Savoy into Italy ; it is of narrow construction, and winds round the Alps with scenery of terrific sublimity on all sides ; above you are mountains like at least a dozen Shap Fells one above another, with their snowy summits hid in the clouds, and below you are frightful precipices hundreds of feet deep, while here and there torrents come dashing from the tops of the mountains, and (so curiously is the road constructed, and sheltered when occasion requires) in some instances actually pass over the heads of the travellers. I should therefore recommend all who wish to see Nature in her grandest form to make a journey through the Simplon.

There are passages in the works of Byron which are not only bold and original in their sublimity, but are possessed of a certain wild eccentricity which genius only can confer ; they dazzle, and bewilder the mind by the originality of their conception ; like a meteor they flash ; then all is over, and the mind is left in wonder and amazement ! Of such a nature is the following passage—

" Could I embody and embosom now
That which is most within me, could I wreak
My thoughts upon expression, and thus throw
Heart, mind, soul, passions, feelings, strong or weak,

All that I would have sought, and all I seek,
 Bear, know, feel and yet breathe, into one word,
 And that one word were Lightning, I would speak ;
 But as it is, I live, and die unheard,
 With a most voiceless thought, sheathing it as a sword."

Along with the remains of art in Greece, Italy and her monuments occupy the principal place in the poem of "Childe Harold." The poet visits Florence, Venice, and Rome, alluding in eloquent language to the remains of the ancient world to be found in each, and commenting upon the decay of that greatness, which was once the wonder of the globe. His address to Italy is as follows—

"And ever since, and now, fair Italy !
 Thou art the garden of the world, the home
 Of all Art yields, and Nature can decree ;
 Even in thy desert, what is like to thee ?
 Thy very weeds are beautiful, thy waste
 More rich than other climes' fertility ;
 Thy wreck a glory, and thy ruin graced
 With an immaculate charm which cannot be defaced."

This beautiful apostrophe he prefaces by another stanza perhaps equally beautiful, but rather tainted by his ordinary, and morbid allusions to himself, who (as I said before) is none other than "Childe Harold"—

"But my soul wanders ; I demand it back
 To meditate amongst decay, and stand
 A ruin amidst ruins ; there to track
 Fall'n states and buried greatness, o'er a land
 Which was the mightiest in its old command,
 And is the loveliest, and must ever be
 The master mould of Nature's heav'nly hand,
 Wherein were cast the heroic and the free,
 The beautiful, the brave, the lords of earth and sea."

When at Florence the poet thus describes the Venus de Medicis, which perhaps you are aware is one of the most wonderful works of art in existence, and without any one exception the greatest model that ever was exhibited of grace, beauty, and perfection in woman, and so exquisitely is the statue executed, that the very marble seems instinct with life and thought, and endowed with a grace and symmetry of form and feature, combined with an expression of countenance so transcendantly beautiful and divine, that the mind is almost awe-struck at the genius of the sculptor ! These are Byron's lines—

" There too the Goddess loves in stone, and fills
 The air around with beauty ; we inhale
 The ambrosial aspect, which beheld, instils
 Part of its immortality ; the veil
 Of heav'n is half withdrawn ; within the pale
 We stand, and in that form and face behold
 What mind can make, when Nature's self would fail ;
 And to the fond idolaters of old
 Envy the innate flash that such a soul could mould.

" We gaze and turn away, and know not where,
 Dazzled and drunk with beauty, till the heart
 Reels with its fulness, there, for ever there
 Chain'd to the chariot of triumphal Art,
 We stand as captives, and would not depart,—
 Away ! there need no words, nor terms precise,
 The paltry jargon of the marble mart,
 Where Pedantry gulls Folly, we have eyes :
 Blood, pulse, and breast, confirm the Dardan Shepherd's prize."

Byron thus describes Venice, alluding to her present condition as contrasting strongly with her glorious condition during the middle ages, when she was at the summit of her wealth, and power, and greatness, and when she was invested with all those romantic attributes to which the youthful imagination clings with so much fondness, for instance, musical gondoliers filling up on moonlight nights the intervals between the dashes of the oars with snatches of song from Tasso, Ariosto, &c. His lines are as follow—

" I stood in Venice, on the bridge of sighs ;
 A palace and a prison on each hand :
 I saw from out the wave her structures rise,
 As from the stroke of the enchanter's wand :
 A thousand years their cloudy wings expand
 Around me, and a dying Glory smiles
 O'er the far times, when many a subject land
 Look'd to the winged Lion's marble piles,
 Where Venice sat in state, throned on her hundred isles !

" She looks a sea Cybele, fresh from ocean,
 Rising with her tiara of proud towers
 At airy distance, with majestic motion,
 A ruler of the waters and their powers ;
 And such she was ; her daughters had their dowers
 From spoils of nations, and the Exhaustless East
 Poured in her lap all gems in sparkling showers,
 In purple was she robed, and of her feast
 Monarchs partook, and deem'd their dignity increased.

" In Venice Tasse's echoes are no more,
 And silent rows the songless gondolier :
 Her palaces are crumbling to the shore,
 And music meets not always now the ear :
 Those days are gone, but Beauty still is here.
 States fall, arts fade, but Nature doth not die,
 Nor yet forget how Venice once was dear,
 The pleasant place of all festivity,
 The revel of the hearth, the masque of Italy."

I may mention that I have been in Venice, and can bear testimony along with Lord Byron to her present state, but at the same time am decidedly of opinion that she never can have been so splendid a city as poets and romancers have described, although at the same time possessed of great wealth and power, and abounding with romantic characteristics. The popular opinion of Venice is as follows. She is a city built on small islands on the Adriatic, with fine, broad canals in place of streets, and marble palaces instead of houses, with beautiful gondolas instead of carriages and horses. The truth, as far as my humble opinion goes, is as follows. There is only one canal in Venice as broad as the Grand Canal used to be, and that is what the Venetians call "The Grand Canal;" the other canals are about the breadth of mill-streams. The only marble palaces I saw were those in the immediate vicinity of the grand canal, and the majority of the houses are divided from their opposite neighbours by lanes so narrow that you may almost shake hands across; indeed, I believe there is hardly a street in the whole of Venice, and the only one I saw was a very shabby affair. The gondolas are the most frightful things you can imagine, conceive a coffin inside a boat, with all the mournful and black emblems of mortality, and you have a gondola. There are however in Venice some fine churches, and the Place of St. Mark with the Doge's Palace, and the cathedral in the Place are splendid, but you surely don't intend bestowing the epithets of "The fair city of the sea" and "beautiful Venice" upon a city whose fine features can be condensed into so very small a compass. I find I am not unique in my opinion of Venice, for I have met people, and some in this neighbourhood, who are precisely of the same.

When at Rome the poet thus describes the Coliseum, the most stupendous, and one of the most remarkable buildings in that famous city.

"Enter, its grandeur overwhelms thee not,
 And why? it is not lessified; but thy mind,
 Expanded by the genius of the spot,
 Has grown colossal, and can only find
 A fit abode wherein appear enshrined
 Thy hopes of immortality; and thou
 Shalt one day, if found worthy, so defined,
 See thy God face to face, as thou dost now
 His Holy of Holies, nor be blasted by his brow."

One of the most wonderful statues in the world is the Apollo Belvidere in the Vatican at Rome. Who was the artist is unknown, but whoever he be, he never has been equalled by any sculptor of modern times. There is so divine and dignified an expression in the countenance, so great a majesty in the attitude of the hunter God, who has just launched a shaft from his immortal bow, and so life-like an expression in the statue generally, that if ever the term "breathing" was justly applied to marble, it is so in this case. Byron's lines on it rank among his most celebrated, they are just what you would expect a man of his genius to write, when lost in admiration at the sight of so much majesty, and classic perfection, as that which the Apollo Belvidere awakens in the mind. His lines are as follow—

"Or view the God of the unerring bow,
 The God of life and poesy of light,
 The sun in human limbs arrayed, and brow
 All radiant from his triumph in the fight;
 The shaft hath just been shot, the arrow bright
 With an immortal's vengeance; in his eye,
 And nostril beautiful disdain, and might,
 And majesty, flash their full lightnings by,
 Developing in that one glance the Deity."

We approach now the end of the poem; the poet concludes all by an address to the ocean, which in my humble opinion is equal to anything he ever wrote, and I may mention that Professor Wilson in one of his criticisms alludes to it in something like the following language. I cannot give you the exact words, as I trust to memory, and it is years since I read the review. "It was a thought worthy of the great spirit of Byron, after shewing his pilgrim the most remarkable monuments of the ancient world, and commenting upon the variableness, and mutability of all the works of man, to conduct him lastly to the borders of the great deep, into which so much that is great has sunk, and into which all must in due time sink.

What other poet would have dared to frame such a termination for such a pilgrimage?" These are the words of the poet—

"Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll!
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
Man marks the earth with ruin, his control
Stops with the shore; upon the wat'ry plain
The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,
When in a moment like a drop of rain,
He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
Without a grave, unknell'd, uncoffin'd, and unknown.

"His steps are not upon thy paths, thy fields
Are not a spoil for him; the vile strength he wields
For earth's destruction thou dost all despise,
Spurning him from thy bosom to the skies,
And send'st him, shiv'ring in thy playful spray,
And howling to his Gods, where haply lies
His petty hope in some near port, or bay,
And dashest him again to earth, there let him lay.

"The armaments which thunderstrike the walls
Of rock-built cities, bidding nations quake,
And monarchs tremble in their capitals;
The oak leviathans whose huge ribs make
Their clay creator the vain title take
Of Lord of these, and arbiter of war;
These are thy toys, and as the snowy flake,
They melt into thy yeast of waves which mar
Alike the Armada's pride, or spoils of Trafalgar!

"Thy shores are empires, chang'd in all save thee,
Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they?
Thy waters wasted them while they were free,
And many a Tyrant since; their shores obey
The stranger, slave, or savage; their decay
Has dried up realms to deserts, not so thou,
Unchangeable save to thy wild waves play;
Time writes no wrinkle on thine azure brow,
Such as creation's dawn beheld, thou rollest now.

"Thou glorious mirror where the Almighty's form
Glasses itself in tempests, in all time,
Calm or convulsed, in breeze, or gale, or storm
Icing the pole, or in the torrid clime,
Dark-heaving, boundless, endless, and sublime,
The image of eternity, the throne
Of the Invisible; e'en from out thy slime
The monsters of the deep are made, each zone
Obeys thee, thou goest forth dread, fathomless, alone.

"And I have loved thee, Ocean ! and my joy
 Of youthful sports was on thy breast to be,
 Borne, like thy bubbles, onward ; from a boy
 I wanted with thy breakers, they to me
 Were a delight, and if the fresh'ning sea
 Made them a terror, 'twas a pleasing fear,
 For I was as it were a child of thee,
 And trusted to thy billows far and near,
 And laid my hand upon thy mane, as I do here."

After reading to you this extract I cannot but advert to the passage—

"Time writes no wrinkle on thine azure brow,"

which is generally considered one of the finest passages he ever wrote, and which I think must appear to all strikingly beautiful, for, true it is, that amid the wrecks of empires, and the risings and falls of kingdoms, the ocean has for ages rolled, and shall for ages continue to roll its waves with the same azure, and beautiful purity, as it did, to use Byron's own expression, when at "creation's dawn."

I now give you one stanza at the commencement of the address to the ocean, introductory to it, and which I should have read before—

"There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
 There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
 There is society where none intrudes
 By the deep Sea, and music in its roar,
 I love not Man the less, but Nature more,
 From these our interviews in which I steal
 From all I may be, or have been before,
 To mingle with the Universe, and feel
 What I cannot express, yet cannot all conceal."

I cannot but advert to the two following lines,

"There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
 There is a rapture on the lonely shore."

Many other poets would have gone into detail, and expatiated upon the pleasure and the rapture in question, but the feeling in Byron's mind was too great for words, and he left for the imagination to picture out for itself the rest. What process I would ask could be more sublime or dignified in its simplicity ?

The next of Lord Byron's poems to which I shall now direct your attention is "The Giaour." The story is as follows—A female slave named Leila is thrown into the sea for infidelity ; the Giaour,

her lover, attempts to rescue her, but arrives too late, the fatal deed having already been perpetrated. He however revenges himself upon Hassan, Leila's master, and the author of the barbarous act by killing him, but sunk in grief at the loss of her to whom he was so attached retires to a convent, and there dies. The poem is written principally in the octosyllabic style of verse, (consisting as the name imports of lines of eight syllables each, and being the favourite versification of Sir W. Scott,) it abounds with beautiful descriptions, and noble sentiments, and is one of Byron's most admired poems. The most celebrated lines in the "Giaour" are those at the commencement of the poem in which the poet apostrophizes Greece, and draws a touching and beautiful comparison between that country and a corpse a few hours after death. As in the latter we behold the features in a certain, calm repose, and though sunk in all the rigidity of the last sleep, yet still eloquent with that breath of the Almighty which so lately inspired them, so much so, that it seems almost mockery to weep, so, in the same manner, though the spirit which once animated Greece is now fled, yet there are still left lingering traces of its once prevailing presence, though they are traces clothed in all the calm, and placid repose of death! Byron's lines are as follow,

"He that hath bent him o'er the dead,
 E'er the first day of death is fled,
 The first, dark day of nothingness,
 The last of danger and distress,
 (Before Decay's effacing fingers
 Have swept the lines where beauty lingers,)
 And mark'd the mild angelic air,
 The rapture of repose that's there,
 The fix'd, yet tender traits that streak
 The languor of that placid cheek,
 And but for that sad, shrouded eye,
 That fires not, wins not, weeps not now,
 And but for that chill, changeless brow,
 Where cold Obstruction's apathy
 Appeals the gazing mourner's heart,
 As if to him it could impart
 The doom he dreads, yet dwells upon;
 Yes; but for these and these alone,
 Some moments, ay, one treacherous hour,
 We still might doubt the tyrant's power;
 So fair, so calm, so softly sealed,
 The first, last look by death revealed!

Such is the aspect of this shore,
 'Tis Greece, but living Greece no more !
 So coldly sweet, so calmly fair,
 We start, for soul is wanting there.
 Here is the loveliness in death,
 That parts not quite with parting breath,
 But beauty with that fearful bloom,
 That hue that haunts it to the tomb,
 Expression's last receding ray,
 A gilded halo hovering round decay,
 The farewell beam of Feeling past away !
 Spark of that flame, perchance of heavenly birth,
 Which gleams, but warms no more its cherish'd earth."

Very fine also is the poet's description of love as flowing in the words of the Giaour, who when in the monastery relates to a friar the story of Leila's death, and alludes in touching and pathetic language to his attachment to her.

" Yes, love indeed is light from Heaven ;
 A spark of that immortal fire
 With angels shared, by Alla given,
 To lift from earth our low desire.
 Devotion wafts the mind above,
 But Heaven itself descends in love ;
 A feeling from the Godhead caught,
 To wean from self each sordid thought ;
 A ray of Him who formed the whole ;
 A glory circling round the soul."

The next poem to which I beg to direct your attention is "The Bride of Abydos." Like "The Giaour" it is a Turkish tale. The story is as follows. A Turkish Pacha called Giaffir had a daughter called Zuleika, whom he wished to give in marriage to a Bey called Osman, for whom however she entertained no feelings of attachment ; but so strenuously did Giaffir pursue his intentions that he confined his daughter to the premises of his palace, and commanded her never to unveil herself, lest her beauty which was of the most surpassing description should captivate others, and possibly deprive Osman of his betrothed. At the instigation of Selim, her supposed brother, by means of a secret key she escapes with him to the shore near. He there discloses to her a story. He tells her that he is not her brother, but her cousin, and that Giaffir had, in order to procure possession of his throne and treasures, poisoned his brother Abdallah,

his (Selim's) father, and that he (Selim himself) though reared during childhood in the palace of Giafir, had left it afterwards and joined a band of pirates, which band he entreated Zuleika to join as his bride. In the midst of their conversation they are surprised at the sight of lights, and justly so, for it turns out that they are borne by Giafir and his attendants who are in search of Zuleika. Selim immediately fires a signal of distress and danger to his comrades who are at some little distance on the sea. In an instant a boat is put off for to come to his rescue, but the crew arrive too late, for Selim is shot by one of Giafir's attendants. The finale of the story is that Zuleika dies of grief for Selim's loss. The poetry of the tale is exquisitely beautiful, and many passages in it rank among Byron's finest, for instance, the opening song written relatively to the clime of the East. There beautifully does he descant upon the sunny and cloudless skies of that favoured land, so rich in the blossom of the orange and myrtle, and whose people partake of the same warmth as the climate in the intensity of their emotions, and violence of their passions. The words of the poet are as follows—

“Know ye the land where the cypress and myrtle
Are emblems of deeds that are done in their clime,
Where the rage of the vulture, the love of the turtle,
Now melt into sorrow, now madden to crime.
Know ye the land of the cedar and vine,
Where the flowers ever blossom, the beams ever shine;
Where the light wings of Zephyr, oppress'd with perfume,
Wax faint o'er the gardens of Gul in her bloom;
Where the citron and olive are fairest of fruit,
And the voice of the nightingale never is mute;
Where the tints of the earth, and the hues of the sky,
In colour though varied, in beauty may vie,
And the purple of Ocean is deepest in dye;
Where the virgins are soft as the roses they twine,
And all, save the spirit of man is divine?
'Tis the clime of the East, 'tis the land of the Sun,
Can he smile on such deeds as his children have done?
Oh! wild as the accents of lovers' farewell
Are the hearts which they bear, and the deeds that they tell.”

Another very celebrated passage in the poem is that descriptive of Zuleika's loveliness, as which I may add I have never yet in the whole range of English poetry met with any description of woman so perfect, or so original; it is as follows—

" Who hath not proved how feebly words essay,
 To fix one spark of Beauty's heavenly ray ?
 Who doth not feel, until his failing sight
 Faints into dimness with its own delight ?
 His changing cheek, his sinking heart confess
 The might, the majesty of loveliness.
 Such was Zuleika, such around her shone
 The nameless charms, unmarked by her alone ;
 The light of love, the purity of grace,
 The mind, the music breathing from her face,
 The heart whose softness harmonis'd the whole,
 And oh ! that eye was in itself a soul."

I may remark how feebly my words essay or those of any other person to shew the perfection of this description, but at the same time imagination can do what words cannot, and who I would ask, that is possessed of the least glimmering of taste, does not perceive in the ineffable grace both of diction and versification a something akin to that almost divine combination of beauty, grace, and womanly gentleness and tenderness which he describes in Zuleika ? What an originality is conveyed in the following line !—

" The mind, the music breathing from her face."

Could any set of words more forcibly convey the idea of beauty in woman than these which, to express the rapture of the mind at visual loveliness have recourse to Painting's twin sister Music, as being the grandest and most impressive and beautiful of the Nine ? Equally original and fine also is the concluding line,

" And oh ! that eye was in itself a soul."

So eloquent and so divine the loveliness of that master feature, that it might be said to convey through its effulgent glance the expression of a separate soul. Among the finest passages of the poem is Selim's address to Zuleika, part of which I now read to you.

" Ay ! let me like the ocean-Patriarch roam,
 Or only know on land the Tartars' home,
 My tent on shore, my galley on the sea
 Are more than cities and Serais to me ;
 Borne by my steed, or wafted by my sail
 Across the desert, or before the gale,
 Bound where thou wilt my barb ! or gilde my prow !
 But be the star that guides the wanderer, Thou !
 Thou, my Zuleika, share and bless my bark ;
 The dove of peace and promise to mine ark !

Or, since that hope denied in worlds of strife,
 Be thou the rainbow to the storms of life !
 The evening beam that smiles the clouds away,
 And tints to-morrow with prophetic ray !
 Blest as the Muezzin's strain from Mecca's wall
 To pilgrims pure and prostrate at his call ;
 Soft as the melody of youthful days,
 That claims the trembling tear of speechless praise ;
 Dear as his native voice to Exile's ears,
 Shall sound each tone thy long loved voice endears."

There is nothing here I intend commenting upon beyond the general eloquence of the language, and the refinement and grace of the versification, principally caused by alliteration. Of the lines I have read the peculiarity in question is I think most conspicuous in the following—

"That steals the trembling tear of speechless praise."

Here we have two words each commencing with S and four with T. If you were to substitute other words for those used by the poet, the effect of the line would be lost, and its eloquent meaning depreciated.

The next poem to which, ladies and gentlemen, I beg to direct your attention is "The Corsair," after which I will conclude. This I have always considered as the poet's master-piece, and I may add that if there is one poem in the language I should like to adopt as a poem after my own heart, that poem is "The Corsair," as it abounds with more vigorous strokes, and Shakspearian touches of nature than any other of his works, and the whole is clothed in a versification remarkable not only for its grace, harmony, and refinement, but for its peculiar aptness to the subject, giving like the wind to the sail, a life, character and fullness to the conceptions of the bard. It is written in the heroic stanza, each line rhyming with the preceding one, after the same fashion as Pope's "Essay on Man," and Campbell's "Pleasures of Hope," but I must say that I know of no other poem in the language in which the same kind of versification is brought to such a climax of perfection, and seems so much dovetailed, and interwoven with the master-strokes of the poet, giving an additional eloquence and fullness to everything he says. The tale narrated by Byron is as follows. In order to prosecute an object of plunder a pirate along with his comrades sails from one of the Greek islands, which was in their possession, and parts from his bride with feelings of deep sorrow. Conrad, the Corsair in

question, contrives a plot against a Turkish Pacha, and in consort with his crew sets fire to some of his buildings, but the plot fails, and the Corsair's party is overwhelmed, and he himself is cast into prison, where the most dreadful and lingering death that human ingenuity can devise is prepared for him. However, his escape is contrived by a female slave called Gulnare, who assisting Conrad out of gratitude for having saved her from the flames which surrounded the palace, not only bribes the guard, but actually kills Seyd the Pacha in his sleep. Conrad accompanied by Gulnare falls in with his companions again, and returns to the island. In a state of great nervous excitement, and alarm for the worst as soon as ever the boat which conveys him from the ship arrives at the shore, he leaps out, and hurries with the rapidity of lightning to the tower occupied by Medora. Alas! he had arrived too late; the object of his affection was dead, having gradually sunk from the effects of a broken heart, supposing him to have been killed. After this Conrad disappears, and is no more seen by his companions for years. Without further preface I shall proceed to comment upon the poem. How fine and inspiring is the pirate's song at the commencement! Who that is possessed of the least poetic sensibility does not enter into the ideas and enthusiasm of the poet, and picture to himself the heaving of the "ever-free," and the wild and changing life and tumultuous joys of a Corsair's life? Part of the song I shall now give you—

"O'er the glad waters of the dark blue sea,
Our thoughts as boundless, and our souls as free;
Far as the breeze can bear, the billows foam,
Survey our empire, and behold our home!
These are our realms, no limit to our sway,
Our flag the sceptre all who meet obey,
Ours the wild life in tumult still to range
From toil to rest, and joy in every change.
Oh! who can tell? not thou luxurious slave,
Whose soul would sicken o'er the heaving wave;
Not thou, vain lord of wantonness and ease!
Whom slumber soothes not, pleasure cannot please,
Oh! who can tell, save he whose heart hath tried,
And danc'd in triumph o'er the waters wide,
The exulting sense, the pulse's madd'ning play,
That thrills the wand'rer of that trackless way?"

In a word, does not the poet here lead you to see more than any language

can express, although he at the same time expresses every thing as forcibly as words could enable him? Take the two following lines for example—

“The exulting sense, the pulse’s madd’ning play,
That thrills the wand’rer of that trackless way.”

Masterly and vigorous is the poet’s delineation of Conrad’s character; it is lengthy and divided into five paragraphs, and I think abounds with as transcendent touches of nature, and genius, as any other parts of the poem. I shall read three of the paragraphs, and comment upon each as I proceed.

“That man of loneliness and mystery,
Scarce seen to smile and seldom heard to sigh;
Whose name appals the fiercest of his crew,
And tints each swarthy cheek with sallower hue;
Still sways their souls with that commanding art,
Which dazzles, leads, but chills the vulgar heart,—
What is that spell that thus his lawless train
Confess and envy, yet oppose in vain?
What should it be that thus their faith can bind;
The power of thought, the magic of the mind!
Link’d with success, assumed and kept with skill,
That moulds another’s weakness to its will,
Works with their hands, but still to these unknown,
Makes e’en their mightiest deeds appear its own—
Such hath it been, shall be, beneath the sun,
The many still must labour for the one!
’Tis Nature’s doom, but let the wretch who toils,
Accuse not, hate not him who wears the spoils—
Oh! if he knew the weight of splendid chains,
How light the balance of his humbler pains!”

How finely here the poet describes the sway which the Corsair held over the minds of his crew, and how admirably the versification helps out the sense! Who does not feel within him that it gives a kind of musical dignity to it? Take for example the lines,

“Still sways their souls with that commanding art
That dazzles, leads, yet chills the vulgar heart.”

What a bold and masterly touch of nature also is contained in the following lines—

“But let the wretch who toils
Accuse not, hate not him who wears the spoils—
Oh! if he knew the weight of splendid chains,
How light the balance of his humbler pains!”

How true it is that the cares of greatness are many and overwhelming!

The poet proceeds to allude in a very eloquent and masterly manner to the secret moments of the Corsair, and describes the inward workings of his mind, and the conflicting sentiments which rend his conscience, in a manner truly worthy of Shakspeare, and has he not chosen the best opportunity for taking the veil from that mystery the human mind, and for describing the tremendous play and dreadful struggle of the master passions which agitate a being like Conrad ? This then is the description of Byron—

“ Slight are the outward signs of evil thought,
 Within, within, 'twas there the spirit wrought !
 Love shows all changes, hate, ambition, guile
 Betray no further than the bitter smile ;
 The lip's least curl, the lightest paleness thrown
 Along the govern'd aspect speak alone
 Of deeper passions, and to judge their mien,
 He who would see, must be himself unseen !
 Then, with the hurried tread, the upward eye,
 The clenched hand, the pause of agony,
 That listens, starting, lest the step too near
 Approach intrusive on that mood of fear ;
 Then, with each feature working from the heart,
 With feelings loos'd to strengthen, not depart,
 That rise, convulse, contend, that freeze or glow,
 Flush on the cheek, or damp upon the brow ;
 Then stranger ! if thou canst, and tremblest not,
 Behold his soul, the rest that soothes his lot !
 Mark how that lone and blighted bosom sears
 The scathing thought of execrated years !
 Behold ! but who hath seen, or e'er shall see
 Man as himself, the secret spirit free ? ”

After reading to you this brilliant and electrifying passage, I cannot but advert to the two fine, and masterly lines which conclude it.

“ Behold ! but who hath seen, or e'er shall see,
 Man as himself, the secret spirit free ? ”

When he wrote these lines how truly impressed was Byron with a sense of the mysterious, and almost contradictory nature of the workings of the human mind, and who is there among us who upon some great and trying occasion has not found that his conduct has been a mystery even to himself, and thoughts and actions have had their play, the spring and source of which even the transcendent genius of a Shakspeare himself could not have unravelled ? The attachment of Conrad to Medora is next dilated on, and in a style not only beautiful and touching, but possessed of a tremendous

vigour, and surpassing boldness of thought and language, that none but a mind girded with all the commanding powers of eloquence and invective in their most stirring form could convey. Moreover, it would seem as if all the poet's soul was thrown into the words, and he felt and sympathized with his own narration ! This then is Byron's description of one peculiar phase of the Corsair's character, the grand redeeming feature of his wayward and misanthropic mind, and so great a one, that in spite of the "thousand crimes" of which the poet afterwards speaks as characterizing him, something like a halo of amiability is thrown over his nature ! I now proceed to give you the words of the noble bard—

"None are all evil, quickening round his heart,
 One softer feeling would not yet depart;
 Oft would he sneer at others as beguill'd
 By passions worthy of a fool or child;
 Yet 'gainst that passion vainly still he strove,
 And e'en in him it asks the name of love !
 Yes, it was love, unchangeable, unchanged,
 Felt but for one from whom he never rang'd;
 Though fairest captives daily met his eye,
 He shunn'd, nor sought, but coldly pass'd them by;
 Though many a beauty droop'd in prison bower,
 None ever soothed his most unguarded hour.
 Yes, it was love, if thoughts of tenderness,
 Tried in temptation, strengthened in distress,
 Unmoved by absence, firm in every clime,
 And yet, Oh more than all ! untir'd by time;
 Which nor defeated hope, nor baffled wile
 Could render sullen, were she near to smile,
 Nor rage could fire, nor sickness fret to vent
 On her one murmur of his discontent;
 Which still would meet with joy, with calmness part,
 Lest that his look of grief should reach her heart;
 Which nought removed, nor menaced to remove,
 If there be love in mortals, this was love !
 He was a villain ! ay, reproaches shower
 On him, but not the passion, or its power,
 Which only proved, all other virtues gone,
 Not guilt itself could quench this loveliest one !"

This glowing and impassioned description of character is succeeded by a soliloquy to which the Corsair gives vent, when on the eve of taking his departure on his expedition of plunder, and in it I cannot but think that Byron displays a great knowledge of the human heart, especially in the

last two lines ; you observe that in the middle of all his deliberations his own folly occurs to him, but the appeal is made in vain, and how true to nature is all this ! Part of the soliloquy I now give you—

“ Long have I led them, not to vainly bleed,
No medium now, we perish or succeed !
So let it be, it irks me not to die ;
But thus to lead them whence they cannot fly.
My lot hath long had little of my care,
But chafes my pride thus baffled in the snare :
Is this my skill ? my craft ? to set at last
Hope, power and life upon a single cast ?
Oh Fate ! accuse thy folly, not thy fate,
She may redeem thee still, nor yet too late.”

But now comes the grand trial ; he has to take leave of Medora, and I think nothing can be more beautiful or touching than their conversation before they part, and nothing more truly heart-rending than their separation. The dialogue begins by Conrad observing when entering the room that her “song is sad,” Medora replies that in Conrad’s absence it could not be otherwise. Then succeeds a great deal of conversation about the expedition, in which Medora in great anxiety about parting from Conrad, endeavours to persuade him to remain, and displays in her language remarkably gentle, and womanly traits of character, shewing that coaxing tenderness, which a fond and affectionate wife entertains for her husband, and alluding to the comforts, which in her conjugal solicitude she had prepared for him. But now succeeds a description of the parting so touching, so heart-rending, and so vigorously described, as to be perfectly unparalleled by the similar one of any other poet, and here I cannot but again call your attention to the fact that if “The Corsair” had been written either in blank verse, or any other versification than the heroic couplet, the effect would have been lost, and who, I would ask, does not feel in the following description that the flow of each line is instinct with the glowing thoughts of the poet, while an energy almost superhuman has been conferred upon the description, the effect of which is perfectly overwhelming to the mind and shews that the choice of good and appropriate language for such a theme tells us indirectly that it is above all language ? I now give you the words of Byron—

“ She rose, she sprung, she clung to his embrace,
Till his heart heav’d beneath her hidden face.

He dared not raise to his that deep blue eye,
 That downcast droop'd in tearless agony.
 Her long, fair hair lay floating o'er his arms,
 In all the wildness of dishevelled charms;
 Scarce beat that bosom where his image dwelt,
 So full, that feeling seem'd almost unfelt!
 Hark! peals the thunder of that signal gun!
 It told 'twas sunset, and he curs'd that sun—
 Again, again, that form he madly press'd,
 Which mutely clasp'd, imploringly caress'd!
 And tott'ring to the couch his bride he bore,
 One moment gas'd, as if to gaze no more;
 Felt that for him earth held but her alone,
 Kiss'd her cold forehead, turn'd, is Conrad gone?
 And is he gone, in sullen solitude
 How oft that awful quietude shall intrude?"

How striking, and how touching is this short episode in the middle of the heart-rending description, and how often a similar question is put to herself by many a fond and affectionate wife in the absence of her husband! The narration goes on—

"And now without the portals porch she rush'd,
 And then at length her tears in freedom gush'd;
 Big, bright and fast, unknown to her they fell,
 But still those lips refus'd to send farewell."

How eloquent and electrifying is this description of womanly character; she actually weeps, and is not aware of it, and how beautiful is that provision of nature which enables the generous spirit in little more than a moment to bring itself to something like composure!

And now a word or two on the sentimentality of Byron as displayed in this poem. How different he is to many other writers in this respect, and how bold, and honest, and downright does his sentimentality appear when compared with the mawkish, and silly affectation by which the pages of many novelists are disfigured! What an honesty, and heartiness, and even freedom there is for instance in the grief of Medora, when her tears fall unknown to her in all the fullness of conjugal anguish and heart-felt affection! After leaving Medora, Conrad hurries towards his ship, and then transformation in his character and spirits are described with great vigour and faithfulness to nature; as soon as he leaves Medora he reflects, and almost changes his intentions altogether, and sacrifices his scheme of plunder to his attachment to Medora, but on second thought

he reasons thus, "No I cannot be so weak, and what will people think of me;" then he yields to the last impression. How true to life and to nature is all this! After going on board and witnessing all the preparations for departure, for example, the cries of the sailors, the dashes of the oars, the swingings of anchors, and more than all, to use the poet's words,

"His own blood-red flag aloft,"

his agitation vanishes all at once, and again to use the words of Byron,

"He feels of all his former self possess'd."

The truthfulness of this transformation all who have ever parted from their friends, to make sea-voyages, and have experienced the usual concomitant sounds at starting on ship-board, must attest. The narrative goes on, having arrived at the city of the Pacha, Conrad contrives to find his way into the presence of Seyd himself, in the disguise of a dervise. Being introduced to him he pretends that he was a prisoner, but has escaped from the pirates, and wishes to persuade him that they keep guard so carelessly that he need be under no apprehensions from them, Conrad's object being to throw Seyd the Pacha off his guard by false representations. In the middle of the conference the galleys in the bay are discovered to be on fire, and the treachery is at once discovered, and a desperate conflict ensues between the corsairs who have gained the land, and the followers of the Pacha. The first-named seem at the beginning to have the better of the fray, and set the Pacha's palace on fire, but soon being surrounded they are overwhelmed by superior numbers, and Conrad himself is taken, and thrown into prison. However, Gulnare, a female slave whom he had rescued from the flames with that humanity which still formed a part of his character, out of gratitude saves him, and effects his escape not only from imprisonment, but from the dreadful death by torture prepared for him, having stabbed Seyd in his sleep. The state of Conrad in his imprisonment is finely described, and especially when his thoughts recur to Medora, and he reflects upon the dreadful agony of mind in which she must be, when she hears of his imprisonment, and in all human probability of his death.

"One thought alone, he could not, dar'd not meet,
Oh! how these tidings will Medora greet!
Then, only then his clanking hands he rais'd,
And strain'd with rage the chain on which he gar'd."

Beautiful also is the description of Gulnare in tears at Conrad's state in one of her visits to him in prison, and I may add, that beauty in tears has often been a favourite theme with poets. Scott says,

"Love is loveliest when embalm'd in tears,"

and Campbell says,

"Beauty's tears are lovelier than her smile,"

but I think there is no description equal to Byron's, part of which I give—

"Oh! too convincing, dangerously dear
In woman's eye the unanswerable tear,
That weapon of her weakness she can wield,
To save, subdue, at once her spear and shield."

In the midst of his description of the events taking place round Conrad, the poet returns to Medora, and describes the state of mind in which she is placed from dreadful anxiety for Conrad. Who that reads the narrative can fail to be struck at its beauty and truthfulness to nature? She is there described as wandering by the sea-shore, looking out for Conrad in a state between hope and despair, and heedless of the spray dashing over her, for to use the poet's own words,

"The chill was at her heart."

At last a boat arrives, containing a few of the crew who had escaped from the power of the Pacha, but alas! Conrad is not among them! As soon as Medora sees them, their silent and significant looks speak as eloquently about Conrad's fate, as words themselves could have done, and she knows all; this is Byron's description—

"It came at last, a sad and shatter'd boat,
Whose inmates first beheld, whom first they sought,
Some bleeding, all most wretched, these the few
Scarce knew they how escap'd, this all they knew.
In silence darkling each appeared to wait
His fellow's mournful guess at Conrad's fate;
Something they would have said; but seem'd to fear
To trust their accents to Medora's ear—
She saw at once, yet sunk not, trembled not,
Beneath that grief, that loneliness of lot,
Within that meek, fair form were feelings high,
That deem'd not till they found their energy.
While yet was hope, they soften'd, flutter'd, wept.
All lost, that softness died not, but it slept;

And o'er its slumber rose that strength that said,
 'With nothing left to love, there's nought to dread,'
 'Tis more than nature's; like the burning might,
 Delirium gathers from the fever's height."

Here Medora speaks—

"Silent you stand, nor would I hear you tell,
 What, speak not, breathe not, for I know it well,
 Yet would I ask, almost my lip denies
 The—quick, your answer—tell me where he lies."

What transcendent touches of nature the poet displays in the last few lines, and how true it is that when any of us suspects by the silence of the bystanders that the worst has befallen some beloved relative that he speaks out in a paroxysm of mental anxiety, being able to endure suspense no longer, and being determined to know the worst! Such was the case with Medora, and they were obliged to tell her the truth about Conrad; she then fell lifeless, though not dead.

To return to Conrad how bold and how vigorous is the poet's description of him in prison, hearing the dashing of the waves, and the roar of the elements, but like a caged eagle in view of his own native mountains, is pining in slavery.

"Oh! how he listen'd to the rushing deep,
 That ne'er till then so broke upon his sleep;
 And his wild spirit wilder wishes sent,
 Rous'd by the roar of his own element!
 Oft had he ridden o'er that winged wave,
 And loved its roughness for the speed it gave;
 And now its dashing echoed on his ear,
 A well-known voice, alas! too vainly near!
 Loud sung the wind above; and doubly loud,
 Shook o'er his turret cell the thunder cloud;
 And flash'd the lightning by his lattice'd bar,
 To him more genial than the midnight star;
 Close to the glimm'ring grate he dragg'd his chain,
 And hop'd that peril might not prove in vain,
 He rais'd his iron hand to heav'n, and pray'd
 One pitying flash to mar the form it made.
 His steel and impious prayer attract alike,
 The storm roll'd onward, and disdain'd to strike;
 Its peal wax'd fainter, ceas'd, he felt alone,
 As if some faithless friend had spurn'd his groan."

To return to our narrative, Conrad being released by Gulnare who kills the Pacha, and bribes the guard, escapes to the shore, and there

embarks for his inland. On the way they fall in with one of his own ships, and he there takes leave of Gulnare. He now reaches home, and now for Medora; the moment the boat which conveys him from the ship to the shore pauses, what are his feelings! With the impetuosity of the storm he hurries to her tower, but finds that he has arrived too late and that all is over, Medora having died from a broken heart through sorrow at Conrad's supposed death, and how magnificently the poet describes the climax of eagerness in which Conrad was as soon as the boat pauses, and he is in sight of the tower!

"The lights are high on beacon and from bower,
And midst them Conrad seeks Medora's tower:
He looks in vain, 'tis strange, and all remark
Amid so many, hers alone is dark.
'Tis strange, of yore its welcome never fail'd,
Nor now; perchance extinguish'd, only veil'd.
With the first boat descends he for the shore,
And looks impatient on the ling'ring oar.
Oh! for a wing beyond the falcon's flight,
To bear him like an arrow to that height!
With the first pause the resting rowers gave,
He waits not, looks not, leaps into the wave,
Strives through the surge, bestrides the beach, and high
Ascends the path familiar to his eye."

But now comes the dreadful moment, and with what amazing vigour and truth to life and nature everything is described, so much so, that we can imagine everything as it took place! What for instance can be more natural to anyone who knows anything of the workings of his own heart, than the manner in which Conrad is described as knocking at the door of Medora's tower; he does so twice; the first time loudly through eagerness, the second time faintly, because he had become nervous at not having been answered. The door is at last opened, but not by Medora, and he is too nervous to ask if all is well, for fear of being answered in the negative! Now what a knowledge of the human heart is here, and what matter could receiving an answer make, if he was told nothing but the truth? But so it was, and so you will find if you are placed in similar circumstances, it is with all of us! This is the description—

"He reach'd his turret door, no sound
Broke from within, and all was night around.
He knock'd and loudly, footstep, nor reply
Announc'd that any heard, or deem'd him nigh;

He knock'd, but faintly, for his trembling hand
 Refus'd to aid his heavy heart's demand.
 The portal opens, 'tis a well-known face,
 But not the form he panted to embrace.
 Its lips are silent, twice his own essay'd,
 And fail'd to frame the question they delay'd;
 He snatch'd the lamp, its light will answer all,
 It quits his grasp, expiring in the fall.
 He would not wait for that reviving ray,
 As soon could he have lingered there for day;
 But glimm'ring through the dusky corridore,
 Another chequers o'er the shadow'd floor;
 His steps the chamber gain, his eyes behold
 All that his heart believ'd not, yet foretold!"

I think that the part of the narrative which describes Conrad as seeing Medora dead, and subsequently the description of her corpse is equal to any other part of the poem, and the whole is distinguished by that masterly vigour of versification by which Byron gave effect to his finest descriptions. The two lines which describe Conrad as first seeing Medora dead are splendid, and without even saying that she is dead, all the same effect is conveyed.

"He turn'd not, spoke not, sunk not, fix'd his look,
 And set the anxious frame that lately shook,
 He gas'd ———"

These two lines are followed by a fine and masterly episode of two other lines in the very midst of this heart-rending description, but it is one which follows naturally, and shews great knowledge of the human heart—

"How oft we gaze despite of pain,
 And know, but dare not own we gaze in vain."

How true it is, for instance, if you receive a letter telling you of the sudden death of some dear relative, a brother, or sister perhaps, that although you know that what the letter says is true, yet you cannot realize, and dare not own it! The description of Medora's corpse is beautiful, and I think that many of us must have observed in the case of any one lately departed that death looks just like sleep, so like animation are the features of the dead! But I must now give you the entire passage—

"He turn'd not, spoke not, sunk not, fix'd his look,
 And set the anxious frame that lately shook,
 He gas'd, how oft we gaze despite of pain,
 And know, but dare not own, we gaze in vain!"

In life itself she was so still, and fair,
 That death with gentler aspect wither'd there;
 And the cold flowers her colder hand contain'd
 In that last grasp as tenderly were strain'd,
 As if she scarcely felt, but feign'd a sleep,
 And made it almost mockery to weep :
 The long dark lashes fring'd her lids of snow,
 And vell'd thought shrinks from all that lurk'd below.
 Oh ! o'er the eye Death most exerts his might,
 And hurls the spirit from her throne of light !
 Sinks those blue orbs in their long, last eclipse,
 But spares as yet the charm around her lips,
 Yet, yet they seem as they forbore to smile,
 And wish'd repose, but only for a while ;
 But the white shroud, and each extended tress,
 Long, fair, but spread in utter lifelessness,
 Which late the sport of every summer wind
 Escaped the baffled wreath that strove to bind,
 These, and the pale, pure cheek became the bier,
 But she is nothing, wherefore is he here ? ”

Very vigorous and touching is the poet's description of Conrad's conduct after his disaster, and there is a great and laconic dignity in these three lines—

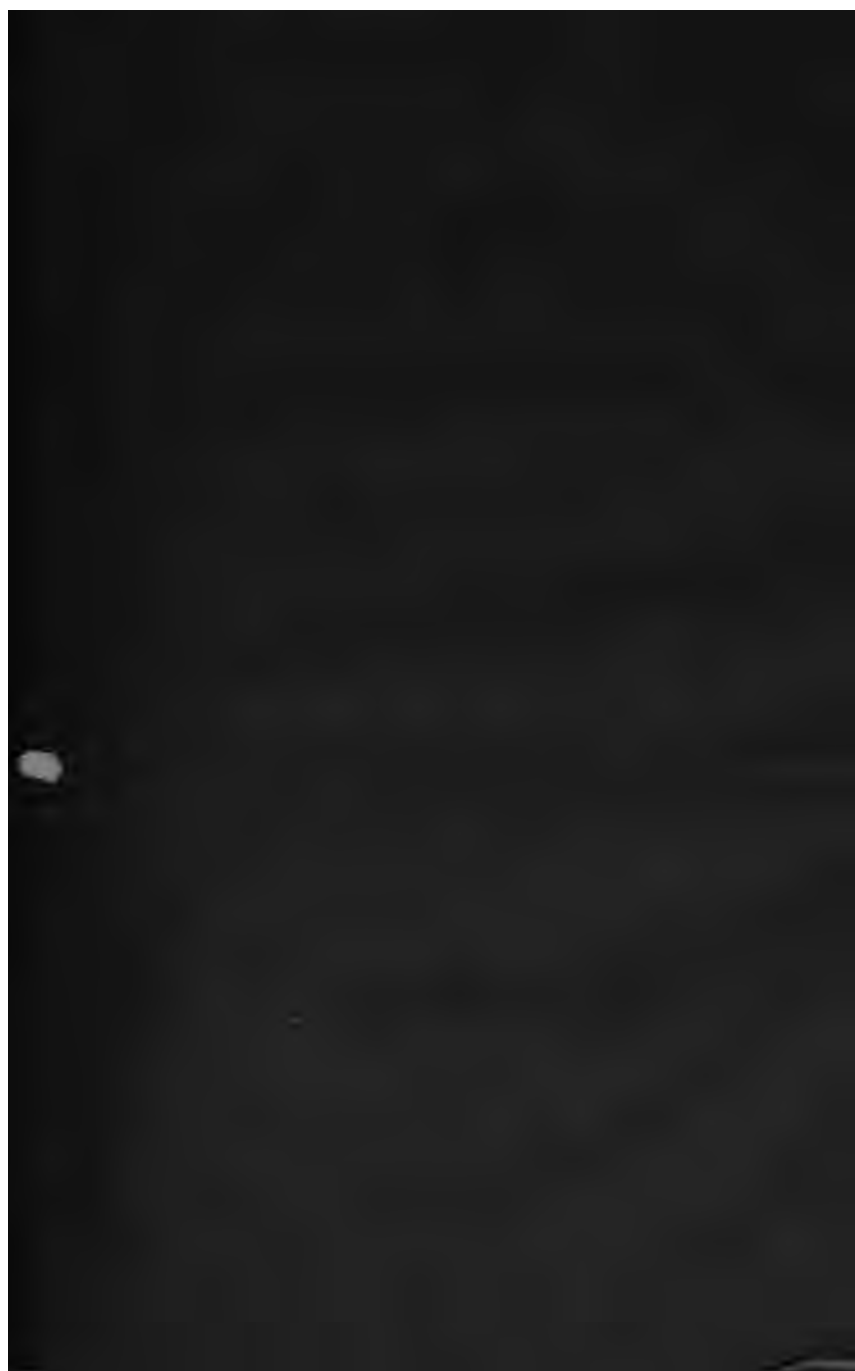
“ He ask'd no question, all were answer'd now
 By that one glance on that still, marble brow.
 It was enough, she died, what reck'd it how ? ”

Very fine also are the concluding lines of the Corsair, and there is a stern and pithy eloquence in the two last—

“ He left a Corsair's name to other times,
 Link'd with one virtue, and a thousand crimes.”

And now, ladies and gentlemen, having concluded my remarks on what I consider the noble bard's masterpiece, and which as a whole is sustained with greater vigour than any other of his works, I must draw my lecture to a close, but allow me to say that since the majestic English language under Addison shone forth with that beauty, and grace and purity, for which his writings are so much distinguished, I know of no writer who has so much dealt with its bright, and dazzling capabilities as Byron, almost taking the mind by storm by his bold and daring and electrifying apostrophes, while he ravishes the senses by his images of beauty and perfection, and appeals to the consciences of his fellow-men by such mighty and transcendent touches of nature, as almost startle us by their

truth! I may add, I know of only one writer who approaches Byron in the masterly, and eloquent style of his composition, and that is Bulwer, who as a prose writer nominally, (though really a poet,) has given the language a vigour and commanding dignity it never received from any other writer of prose in the pure acceptation of the word, before. But to return to the immediate subject of my lecture, let me advise you all to read the writings of the noble Lord. I have been able to advert in the course of this lecture to only a few of his principal poems, and that in a cursory manner, but, if you prosecute the study of his works, which are admired by almost every votary of poetic taste, you shall find beauties, and excellencies which shall amply repay you for the time and attention you have bestowed.





Ferguson, J. C.
LECTURE

ON THE

GENIUS AND WRITINGS
OF BULWER,

DELIVERED AT THE REQUEST OF THE WORKING MEN'S
LECTURE COMMITTEE, IN THE SHADDONGATE
SCHOOL ROOM, CARLISLE.

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A LECTURE ON BULWER.

It may not be amiss for us at the commencement of this lecture upon the writings of Bulwer, to enquire what is the mission of the novelist? I answer, simply to pourtray human nature and life, together with the manners and customs of society in their true colours. To depict the habits and manners of mankind in past ages with a vividness and truth which brings them to the minds' eye as if they were living before us at the present day. To describe the world now around us truly and faithfully, not only under the phases with which we are nearly all familiar, but under circumstances the most removed from the ordinary eye; the gaming table, and haunt of infamy, as well as the polished conventionalities of the drawing room. Lastly, to unfold the human heart, and show its wonderful workings with exactness and faithfulness to nature; to take the veil from that which is a mystery to itself, and show the often terrible conflict of the master-passions which rend it.

Such a writer as that which I have described is Bulwer, a novelist of equal power with Scott himself, and whose great and extensive renown has caused his works to be translated into many Continental languages. I know of no writer who has shown a greater acquaintance with life in all its varied appearances than Bulwer has done, life in all its different grades from Belgrave Square down to Billingsgate, and if you would wish a writer who more than another is a thorough man of the world, and perfect gentleman, that writer is our Author. Should you wish to read a work that peculiarly bears me out in what I say, that work is "*Pelham, or the adventures of a Gentleman.*" It is the book on which Bulwer first founded his fame, and I may add that I do not know of any other novel in the language which gives so good a description of the career of a young scion of the Aristocracy, who is what is called "*fast*".

One of the most dazzling peculiarities of Bulwer is his command of language; I know of no writer who more nearly resembles Byron in this particular than he does, and how truly may it be said of him, as Macaulay said of the former, that "the strokes are few and masterly!" Blair, in his work on rhetoric, divides style into two classes, the concise, and the diffuse, the former he designates is the best for

description, the latter for explanation, and I would ask, have we not here, viz. in Bulwer, an admirable illustration of the aptness of the first of these styles to the painting that language employs? The critic above mentioned again divides style into five divisions, beginning with the dry as the lowest in the scale, and ending with the elegant and the florid as the highest, and I think a combination of these two last will best mark the peculiarity of the great novelist on whose works I now lecture. As in the case of Byron, our author displays a vigour of thought and language, that amazes the mind by its power. dazzling it by his bold, daring, and electrifying apostrophes, which burst upon it like a flash of lightning, and then all is over!

Before enlarging upon the writings of Bulwer, perhaps you will allow me to read an extract from a work by Gilfillan, entitled "Gallery of Literary Portraits," the extract being relative to the genius of our novelist.

"We need meet it only by pronouncing the magic word "Zanoni". Who that ever read that glorious romance with its pictures of love and life and death, and the mysteries of the unseen world; the fire dance of the human and preternatural elements which are in it, and keep time so admirably to the music of the genius that has created both, and the melting sublimity of its close, will deny the author the name of poet? Or who that has read those allegories and little tales that are sprinkled through the "Student" and the "Pilgrims of the Rhine" can fail to see in them the creative element? Or, take the end of his Harold, the death of Rienzi, the Hell scene in "Night and Morning", and the closing chapters of "The last days of Pompeii", the terms "oratory" or "art" will not measure these; they are instinct with power; their words are the mighty rushing wings of a supernal tempest; and to us, at least, they always, even at the twentieth perusal, give that deep, delightful shiver, that thrill of awful joy, which proclaims that "the Spirit of Genius" is passing by, and is making every hair of our flesh start up to do him homage".

To return to my own remarks, I would observe that no author ever possessed greater power of describing the terrible and the fearful, than our author, whose amazing force of language and strength of imagination give an additional horror to the dreadful, and strike the mind with a two-fold awe, first, that of a fictitious terror at the harrowing description, and secondly, that of wonder and amazement at the daring power of the genius of the novelist.

To illustrate what I have said, read the following description in "*The last days of Pompeii*" of the scream that the blind girl Nydia gave, when caught making her escape.

"As a hare's last human cry in the fangs of the dogs, as the sharp

voice of terror uttered by a sleep walker suddenly awakened, broke the shriek of the blind girl, when she felt the sudden grip of her gaoler. It was a shriek of such bitter agony, such entire despair, that it might have rung hauntingly in your ears for ever. She felt as if the last plank of the sinking Glaucus were torn from his clasp. It had been a suspense of life and death, and death had now won the game."

Now, I would ask, is there not something fearful and harrowing in this description, a something which we can all better imagine than describe? And who does not know the thrilling power of the human voice when in extremity, that voice which even under ordinary circumstances is instinct with the soul that prompts it, and from which it emanates? Such was Nydia's shriek, which Bulwer eloquently compares to "the last human cry of the hare when in the fangs of the dogs."

One of the most admired and remarkable passages of the novel from which I have just quoted is the description of that irruption of Vesuvius, which overwhelmed Pompeii, and rendered it a heap of ruins, this I give as another instance of our author's wonderful power over the terrible.

"Frequently by the momentary light of these torches, parties of fugitives encountered each other, some hurrying towards the sea, others flying from the sea to the land; for the ocean had rapidly retreated from the shore, an utter darkness lay over it, and upon its groaning and tossing waves the storm of cinders and rock fell without the protection which the streets and roofs afforded to the land. Wild, haggard, ghastly with supernatural fears, these groups encountered each other, but without the leisure to speak, to consult, to advise; for the showers fell now frequently though not continuously, extinguishing the lights which showed to each band the death-like faces of the other, and hurrying all to seek refuge under the nearest shelter. The whole elements of civilization were broken up. Ever and anon, by the flickering lights, you saw the thief hastening by the most solemn authorities of the law, laden with and fearfully chuckling over the produce of his sudden gains. If, in the darkness, wife was separated from husband, or parent from child, vain was the hope of re-union. Each hurried blindly and confusedly on. Nothing in all the various and complicated machinery of social life was left save the primal law of self-preservation."

As a sequel to this, I now read you another passage from the same chapter, and relative to the same subject.

"While they were thus terribly protected, a group of men and women bearing torches passed by the temple. They were of the congregation of the Nazarenes, and a sublime and unearthly motion had not indeed quelled their awe, but it had robbed awe of fear. They had long believed according to the error of the early Christians, that the Last Day was at hand, they imagined now that the Day had come. "Woe! Woe! cried, in a shrill and piercing voice, the elder at the head. "Behold! the Lord descendeth to judgement! He maketh fire come down from heaven in

the sight of men! Woe! woe! ye strong and mighty! Woe to you of the fasces and the purple! Woe to the idolater and the worshipper of the beast! Woe to ye that pour forth the blood of saints and gloat over the death-pangs of the sons of God! Woe to the harlot of the sea! woe! woe!"

The Nazarenes paced slowly on, their torches still flickering in the storm, their voices still rais'd in menace and solemn warning, till, lost amid the windings of the streets, the darkness of the atmosphere, and the silence of death again fell over the scene."

After reading to you these sublime and electrifying passages, I feel I cannot but remark upon them at some length. Who that has followed me in the awful narrative can fail to be struck with the wonderful powers of the novelist's imagination, and the terrific burst of that convulsion of nature which levelled with the dust one of the most beautiful of ancient cities? Could any set of words more forcibly bring before the mind's eye the whole proceeding, or could it possibly be improved upon? The rumbling of the ground, the pitch darkness that prevail'd, relieved only by the flashes from the burning mountain, the crash of falling buildings, the showers of ashes which enveloped in death thousands, and the extreme of terror which filled all who were rushing from the city in self preservation? It would seem as if the burning mountain had been the valve of Hell itself opened for to destroy them, and as if all the horrors of that place of torment had been let loose on the world. And I would ask, is there not a something almost unearthly in the wildness of this dreadful scene, and is not the hair almost ready to stand on end at the description of confusion of terror which filled every bosom? How very apt also is the allusion to the breaking up, during the interval of horror, of the ordinary restrictions which restrain the evil-doer, the thief counting the gains of which he had so suddenly become possessed with a chuckling mixed with terror! How fine also is the allusion to the mention made by the Nazarenes to the supposed day of judgment with which they naturally connected the terrible events of that day!

If you would read an account of a scene of horror and alarm and desolation, depicted by a master in a manner which brings it to the mind's eye in all its true terrors, read the account of the plague which during the tribuneship of Rienzi devastated the principal part of Italy, than which account I think nothing can be more sublimely appalling, or more calculated to awaken a sense of sickness and horror, and feeling of humiliation at the dreadful contagions to which human nature is subject. I now give you two of the principal parts of the narrative.

"It was a bright, oppressive, sultry morning, when a solitary horseman was seen winding that unequal'd road, from whose height, amidst fig-trees, vines and olives, the traveller beholds gradually break upon his gaze the enchanting valley of the Arno, and the spires and domes of Florence. But not with the traveller's accustomed eye of delight and admiration passed that solitary horseman, and not upon the usual activity and mirth, and animation of the Tuscan life, broke that noon-day sun. All was silent, void, and hush'd, and even in the light of heaven there seem'd a sickly and ghastly glare. The cottages by the road side were shut up and clos'd, some open, but seemingly inmateless. The plough stood still, the distaff plied not, horse and man had a dreary holiday. There was a darker curse upon the land than the curse of Cain! Now and then a single figure, usually clad in the gloomy robe of a friar, cross'd the road, lifting towards the traveller a livid and amazed stare, and then hurried on, and vanished beneath some roof, whence issued a faint and dying moan, which but for the exceeding stillness around could scarcely have pierced the threshold. As the traveller near'd the city, the scene became less solitary, yet more dread. There might be seen carts and litters, thick awnings wrapp'd closely round them, containing those that sought safety in flight, forgetful that the plague was everywhere! And while these gloomy vehicles, conducted by horses, gaunt, shadowy skeletons, crawling heavily along, passed by, like hearses of the dead, sometimes a cry burst the silence in which they moved, and the traveller's steed started aside, as some wretch, on whom the disease had broke forth, was dropp'd from the vehicle by the selfish inhumanity of his comrades, and left to perish by the way. Hard by the gate, a waggon pass'd and a man with a mask threw out its contents in a grim slimy ditch that border'd the road. These were garments and robes of all kinds and value, the broider'd mantle of the gallant, the hood and veil of my lady, and the rags of the peasant. While glancing at the labour of the masker, the cavalier beheld a herd of swine, gaunt and half famished, run to the spot in the hopes of food, and the traveller shuddered to think what food they might have anticipated! But ere he reached the gate, those of the animals that had been busiest rooting at the infectious heap, dropped down dead among their fellows. "Ho, ho," said the masker, and his hollow voice sounded yet more hollow through his vizard—"comest thou here to die, stranger? See thy brave mantle of triple pile and golden brockery will not save thee from the gavocciolo. Ride on, ride on—to-day fit morsel for thy lady's kiss, to-morrow, too foul for the rat and worm!" Replying not to this hideous welcome, Adrian, for it was he, pursued his way. The gates stood wide open, this was the most appalling sign of all, for, at first, the most jealous precaution had been taken against the ingress of strangers. Now all care, all foresight, all vigilance, were vain. And thrice nine warders had died at that single post, and the officers to appoint their successors were dead also! Law and Police, and the Tribunals of Health, and the Boards of Safety, Death had stopped them all. And the Plague killed art itself, social union, the harmony and mechanism of civilization, as if they had been bone and flesh! So mute and solitary went on the lover in his quest of love, resolved to find his betroth'd, and guided (that faithful and loyal knight!) through the Wilderness of Horror, by the blessed hope of that strange passion, noblest of all when noble, basest of all when base. He came into a broad and spacious square lined with palaces, the usual haunt of the best and most graceful nobility of Italy.

The stranger was alone now, and the tramp of his gallant steed sounded ghastly and fearful in his own ears, when just as he turned the corner of one of the streets that led from it, he saw a woman steal forth with a child in her arms, while another, yet in infancy, clung to her robes. She held a large bunch of flowers to her nostrils (the fancied and favourite mode to prevent infection,) and muttered to the children, who were moaning with hunger. "Yes, yes, you shall have food! Plenty of food for the stirring forth. But oh, that stirring forth!" and she peared about and round, lest any of the diseased might be near. "My friend, can you direct me to the Convent of——," Away, away, man," shrieked the woman. "Alas," shrieked Adrian, with a mournful smile, "can you not see that I am not, as yet, one to spread contagion?" But the woman unheeding him fled on; when, after a few paces, she was arrested by the child that clung to her. "Mother, Mother!" it cried, "I am sick—I cannot stir." The woman halted, tore aside the child's robe, saw under the arm the fatal tumour, and deserting her own flesh, fled with a shriek along the square. The shriek rang long in Adrian's ears, though not aware of the unnatural cause. The mother feared not for her infant, but for herself. The voice of nature was no more heeded in that charnel city than it is in the tomb itself! Adrian rode on at a brisker pace, and came at length before a stately church; its doors were wide open, and he saw within a company of monks, (the church had no other worshippers, and they were masked) gathered round the altar, and chanting the *Miserere Domine*; the minister of God, in a city hitherto boasting the devoutest population in Italy, without a flock!"

Now, I would ask, is there not something in this description fearful in its sickliness, and appalling in its terrors, to an almost unearthly extent? What can be more dreadful or more revolting than the idea of the ties of kindred being so severed and broken up, as to admit of a mother leaving her own child to perish from the plague? Or again, what can be more repulsive to our feelings, than the thought of corpses being left unburied with Christian rites, but thrown to save trouble into a ditch, and then to become the dreadful food and the poison of swine? But I now pass on to give you another passage, a continuation of the same dreadful narrative. It is a description of a large pit, into which many bodies had been thrown; deaths being so numerous, that it was out of the question to think of giving each corpse a separate and respectful burial. But if anything can, surely the following description must give us a humiliating view of human nature, so sickly and loathsome as it is in its horrors.

"It was a large, deep, and circular space, like the bottom of an exhausted well. In niches cut into the walls of earth around, lay, duly coffined, those who had been the earliest victims of the plague, when the Beccino's market was not glutted, and priest followed, and friend mourned the dead. But on the floor below, there was the loathsome horror! Huddled and matted together—some naked, some in shrouds, already black and rotten, lay the later guests, the unshriven and unblest! The torches, the sun,

streamed broad and red over corruption in all its stages, from the pale blue tint and swollen shape, to the moistened undistinguishable mass, or the riddled bones, where yet clung in stripes and tatters, the black and mangled flesh. In many, the faces remained almost perfect, while the rest of the body was but bone, the long hair, the human face, surmounted the grisly skeleton. There was the infant still on the mother's breast; there was the lover, stretched across the dainty limbs of his adored! The rats, (for they clustered in numbers to that feast,) disturbed, not scar'd, sate up from their horrid meal, as the light glimmered over them, and thousands of them lay round, stark and dead, poisoned by what they fed on! There, too, the wild satire of the grave diggers had cast, though stripped of their gold and jewels, the emblems that spoke of departed rank; the broken wand of the Councillor; the General's baton; the Priestly mitre! The foul and livid exhalations gathered like flesh itself, fungous and putrid upon the walls, and the

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But who shall detail the ineffable and unimaginable horrors that reigned over the Palace where the Great King received the Prisoners whom the sword of the Pestilence had subdued?"

How sickly and how humiliating in its horrors is this description, and how penetrated we all feel with a sense of the great final degradation of the earthly shell of the immortal soul! Is there not, I would ask, an eloquence, though silent, yet ineffably stern in its terrors in the grouping of this dreadful scene, the emblems of the rank upon which the Aristocrat prided himself, and the tatters of the pauper mingling with the horrors of this terrible place? Surely we must feel for once that Death is a "Great Leveller"?

I have always been of opinion that Bulwer's command of language and dignity of expression shine with greatest brilliance in his descriptions of men imposing and majestic in their demeanour, and evincing a strength and firmness of mind amid the trying circumstances of a surrounding crisis. There are a certain boldness and vigour of words, which like the master-strokes of Byron, fill us with wonder and amazement, and instil into our minds an overwhelming sense of the majesty they describe. Take, for instance, the allusion in "*The Last Days of Pompeii*," to Paul preaching at Athens, the narrative is as follows:—

"Well do I remember to have heard my father speak of one strange guest at Athens, many years ago, methinks his name was Paul. My father was amongst a mighty crowd that gathered on one of our immortal hills to hear this sage of the East expound, through the wide throng there rang not a single murmur! The jest and the roar with which our native orators are received were hushed for him; and when on the loftiest summit of that hill, raised above the breathless crowd below, stood this

mysterious visitor, his mien and his countenance awed every heart, even before a sound left his lips. He was a man, I have heard my father say, of no tall stature, but of noble and impressive mien, his robes were dark and ample; the declining sun, for it was evening, shone aslant upon his form, as it rose aloft, motionless and commanding, his countenance was much worn and marked, as of one who had braved alike misfortune and the sternest vicissitudes of many climes; but his eyes were bright with an almost unearthly fire, and when he raised his arm to speak, it was with the majesty of a man into whom the spirit of a God had rushed."

Who that reads this can fail to be struck with the commanding eloquence of the language employed? It is an eloquence akin to the dignified display of the Apostle, who, as he describes, raised his arm to speak "with the majesty of a man into whom the spirit of a God had rushed!" Equally fine also, is the description of the raising of the Widow of Nain's son, as supposed to be told by the man himself, it is as follows:—

"And the face revived me from the dead. Know, young proselyte to the true faith, that I am he of whom thou readest in the scroll of the Apostle. In the far Judea, and in the city of Nain, there dwelt a widow, humble of spirit and sad of heart; for of all the ties of life one son alone was spared to her. And she loved him with a melancholy love, for he was the likeness of the lost. And the son died. The reed on which she leaned was broken, the oil was dried up in the widow's cruise. They bore the dead upon his bier, and near the gate of the city, where the crowd were gathered, there came a silence over the sounds of woe, for the son of God was passing by. The mother, who followed the bier, wept, not noisily, for all could see that her heart was crushed. And the Lord pitied her, and he touched the bier and said, "I say unto thee, arise." And the dead man woke, and looked upon the face of the Lord. Oh! that calm and solemn brow, that unutterable smile, that careworn and sorrowful face, lighted up with a God's benignity—it chased away the shadows of the grave! I rose, I spoke, I was living, and in my mother's arms. Yes, I am the dead revived! The people shouted, the funeral horns rang forth merrily: there was a cry "God hath visited his people!" I heard them not—I felt—I saw—nothing—but the face of the Redeemer!" The old man paused, deeply moved; and the youth felt his blood creep, and his hair stir. He was in the presence of one who had known the Mystery of Death!"

Who that has followed me in this narrative can feel unmoved at the description? And if it be true that man wears upon his brow the majesty of an intellect that distinguishes him from the inferior creation, how much more must it have been the case with one who "spake as never man spake," and whose person was invested with a halo of solemnity God-like and ineffable, but chastened by the expression of the tenderest and most benevolent sympathy! Such was the look which Bulwer finely describes, as chasing away the shadows of

the grave. But who does not amid the novelist's description feel at once the sublimity and the solemnity of the scene? Who does not feel that the effect must have been grand and electrifying, when the tomb acknowledged the presence of its Monarch, and Corruption delivered up his prisoners at the beck of him who held the keys of Death and Hell? How natural also is the allusion to the youth as feeling "his blood creep and his hair stir" at the thought of being left in the presence of one who had known "the Great Secret," a secret the subject of so much dread and speculation to the minds of the living!

But to change to another subject, how dignified and imposing is the description given of Eugene Aram, when the officers of justice apprehend him, as contained in the novel bearing that name! And who that reads can fail to be struck with the similarity of style to the other productions of the master-mind on whose works I now have the honour to lecture? You will find that there is the same dignified and majestic bearing in all, and the same commanding greatness of mind, a greatness that involuntarily wins for itself the admiration of the reader. I now give you the passage.

"The bolt was withdrawn, the door was burst open, and even Walter Lester, even the officers of justice with him, drew back for a moment, as they beheld the lofty brow, the majestic presence, the features so unutterably calm of Eugene Aram."

To turn to another and more pleasing theme, I may remark that I have never yet met with any writer who equals Bulwer in his descriptions of the female figure, and delineations of her character. If you read one of his descriptions of women, you cannot fail to be struck with something eloquent of virgin purity, ineffable grace, and womanly gentleness and tenderness, and feel at the same time that if the majesty of the human race, (by which is meant man more particularly,) entitle them to the appellation of the image of God, the feminine graces and softness of woman best show forth the gentle attributes of His character. And who that has gazed upon a beautiful female figure, replete with the perfection of grace and loveliness, does not feel that there is a something of Deity and Divinity in the halo that moves in every glance of her eye, and step of her foot? To return more immediately to our subject, read the description in "*The last days of Pompeii*" of Ione, a description which I think is surpassed, if equalled, by none in

the range of literature, ancient or modern, the passage is as follows:—

"She had raised her veil also in prayer; and when our eyes met, methought a celestial ray shot from those dark and shining orbs at once into my soul. Never, my Claudius, have I seen mortal face more exquisitely moulded, a certain melancholy soften'd and yet elevated its expression; that unutterable something which springs from the soul, and which our sculptors have imparted to the aspect of *Paysche*, gave her beauty I know not what of divine and noble."

The perfection of this description all must be struck with; there being a something at once chaste, beautiful, and masterly, in the very apparent want of details to finish the picture. The broad outlines are described and the mind is left to picture out the rest, as the loveliness in question was so transcendent, that going into particulars would only detract from the overwhelming effect of the description. You must all here agree with me, that as Macaulay said of Byron, "the strokes are few and masterly" and that greater eloquence is shown by the passage just quoted, than if the Author had gone into detail. Very beautiful also is Bulwer's description of Ellen Glanville in the novel of "*Pelham*." The novelist here enters more into particulars than in the previous instance, as it suited his purpose so to do, but the picture is not less beautiful; I now give you the passage.

"The object of our exclamations was standing by a corner shop, apparently waiting for some one within. Her face, at the moment I first saw her, was turn'd full towards me. Never had I seen any countenance half so beautiful. She was apparently about twenty; her hair was of the richest chesnut, and a golden light play'd through its darkness, as if a sunbeam had been caught in those luxuriant tresses, and had been striving in vain to escape. Her eyes were of light hazel, large, deep, and shaded into softness, (to use a modern expression,) by long and dark lashes. Her complexion alone would have rendered her beautiful, it was so clear, so pure; the blood gush'd beneath it, like roses under a clear stream; if, in order to justify my simile, roses could have the complacency to grow in such a situation. Her nose was of that fine and accurate mould that one so seldom sees, except in the Grecian statues, which unites the clearest and most decided outline with the most feminine delicacy and softness: and the short curved arch which descended from thence to her mouth was so fine—so airily and exquisitely formed, that it seemed as if Love himself had modelled the bridge which led to his most beautiful and fragrant island. On the right side of the mouth was one dimple, which corresponded so exactly with every smile and movement of those rosy lips, that you might have sworn the shadow of each pass'd there; it was like the rapid changes of an April Heaven reflected upon a valley. She was somewhat, but not much taller than the ordinary height, and her figure, which united all the first freshness and youth of the girl with the more luxuriant graces of the woman, was rounded and finish'd so justly,

that the eye could glance over the whole, without discovering the least harshness or unevenness, or atom to be added or subtracted. But over all these was a light, a glow, a pervading spirit of which it is impossible to convey the faintest idea. You should have seen her by the side of a shaded fountain on a summer's day. You should have watch'd her amidst music and flowers, and she might have seem'd to you like the fairy that presided over both."

You must all be struck with the extreme beauty of this description, so replete as it is with poetical grace and elegant phraseology. It is finish'd and elaborate in detail like the most exquisitely wrought roof, while the description before quoted is like the noble and classic simplicity of a Grecian portico. What an apt and original display of similes our Author unfolds, for instance, when he compares the smile cast upon her countenance to the rapid changes of an April Heaven cast upon a valley! How true it is that all our ideas of grace and gentleness, or sternness and majesty, may equally be applied to the human countenance as to the landscape!

And now, gentlemen, by way of a short episode to enliven this lecture, and create a little merriment among you, I shall give you an extract in Bulwer's comical style, from the novel of "*Eugene Aram*." It is a description of an affair with an M.D., who was one of the leech tribe, and rather unwilling to let go his hold of a patient who could afford to pay him. With all due deference to the gentlemen of the medical profession, who I am inclined to think are on the main as honourable as other people; we must all be aware that we occasionally meet with doctors of the class alluded to, men who make it their business to retard, instead of expedite the recovery of their patients, in order to make their visits as numerous, and consequently their fees as large as possible. The antecedent part of the story I am going to read to you I shall relate in as few words as I can. One of the principal characters in the novel, somewhere in Yorkshire, was thrown from his horse, and though considerably hurt, his bruises were of such a nature that by a few proper remedies being applied, and leaving the rest to that wonderful physician Nature, they would soon have healed. Very unfortunately, however, our friend got into the clutches of one of the doctors I have been describing, who leech'd, bled, blister'd and physic'd him to an enormous extent, by way of making a good thing out of his patient, and at the same time kept protracting his final visit to an indefinite period. The gentleman however, finding himself getting weaker and weaker every

day, instead of better and stronger, held a consultation with his servant, who had been a corporal in the army, and was a sharp-witted Yorkshireman, and the laughable sequel I am about to read will show how the M.D.'s plans were disconcerted. The consultation is brief, and is told by the novelist as follows:—

“ ‘That fellow Fillgrave is coming back in an hour to bleed me; do you mount guard—refuse to let him in—pay him his bill—you have the money—and hark ye, dont be rude to the rascal.’ ‘Rude, your honour, not I—been in the Forty-second—knows discipline—only rude to the privates!’ The Corporal having seen his master conduct himself respectably toward the viands with which he supplied him—having set his room to rights, brought him the candles, borrowed him a book, and left him for the present, in extremely good spirits, and prepared for the flight of the morrow; the Corporal, I say, now lighting his pipe, stationed himself at the door of the Inn, and waited for Mr. Pertinax Fillgrave. Presently the doctor, who was a little thin man, came bustling across the street, and was about with a familiar ‘Good evening’ to pass by the Corporal, when that worthy dropping his pipe, said respectfully ‘Beg pardon, sir, want to speak to you—a little favour—Will your honour walk into the back parlour?’ ‘Oh! another patient’ thought the doctor; ‘these soldiers are careless fellows—often get into scrapes—Yes, friend, I am at your service.’ The Corporal showed the man of phials into the back parlour, and hemming thrice, looked sheepish as if in doubt how to begin—It was the doctor’s business to encourage the bashful. ‘Well, my good man,’ said he, brushing off with the arm of his coat some dust that had settled on his inexpressibles, ‘so you want to consult me?’ ‘Indeed, your honour, I do; but feel a little awkward in doing so—a stranger and all.’ ‘Pooh! medical men are never strangers—I am the friend of every man that requires my assistance.’ ‘Augh! and I do require your honour’s assistance, sadly.’ ‘Well, well, speak out—anything of long standing?’ ‘Why, only since we have been here, sir.’ ‘Oh! that’s all well.’ ‘Your honour’s so good—that—wont scruple to tell you all—You sees as how we were robbed—master at least was—had some little in my pockets, but we poor servants are never too rich—You seems such a kind gentleman, so attentive to master, though you felt how disinterested it was to ‘tend a man that had been robbed—that I have no hesitaiou in making bold to ask you to lend us a few guineas, just to help us out with the bill here—bother?’ ‘Fellow!’ said the doctor rising, I dont know what you mean; but I’ll have you to learn that I am not to be cheated out of my time and property, I shall insist upon being paid my bill instantly, before I dress your master’s wound once more!’ ‘Augh!’ said the Corporal, who was delighted to find the doctor so immediately into the snare! ‘wont be so cruel, surely! why you’ll leave us without a single shiner to pay my host here!’ ‘Nonsense! If your master is a gentleman, he can write home for more money’ ‘Ah, sir, all very well to say so; but between you and me and the bed-post, young master’s quarrelled with old master—old master wont give him a rap: so I’m sure since your honour is a friend to every man that needs your assistance—an able saying, sir, you wont refuse a few guineas—and as for the bill, why—’ ‘Sir, you’re an

impudent vagabond' cried the doctor, as red as a rose-draught, and flinging out of the room; 'and I warn you, that I shall bring in my bill, and expect it to be paid within ten minutes.' The doctor waited for no answer—he hurried home, scratch'd off his account, and flew back with it in as much haste as if his patient had been a month longer under his care, and was consequently on the brink of that happier world, where, since the inhabitants are immortal, it is very evident that doctors, as being useless, are never admitted. The Corporal met him as before—'There, sir,' cried the doctor, breathlessly; and then putting his arms a kimbo, 'take that to your master and desire him to pay me instantly.' 'Augh! and I shall do no such thing.' 'You wont?' 'No, for shall pay you myself. Where's your receipt—eh?' And with great composure the Corporal drew out a well-filled purse, and discharged the bill. The doctor was so thunderstricken, that he pocketed the money without saying a single word. He consoled himself however, with the belief that Walter, whom he had tamed into a becoming hypochondria, would be sure to send for him in the morning. Alas, for mortal expectation! the next morning Walter was once more on the road."

One of the most striking peculiarities of our novelist's style is the bold and impassioned manner in which he describes the conduct of people who are actuated by the feeling of revenge, and one of the most forcible of these descriptions is in the novel of "*Pelham*." It would seem as if almost supernatural powers of thought and language had been communicated to the novelist, and as if he had the means of conceiving (intellectually) thoughts too dreadful for the finite nature of the human soul, thoughts invested with a certain demoniac malice as dreadful in its wildness as that which we might think would actuate the Prince of Darkness himself, should he become incarnate on earth! None but an intellect of the most exalted character could have dared to venture on such a theme! I now give you the passage.

"On receiving this reply, a stern, sullen, iron spirit entered into my bosom, I betrayed no external mark of passion; I sat down in silence—I placed the letter and Gertrude's picture before me. Then, still and motionless, I remained for hours—I remember well, I was awakened from this gloomy reverie by the clock, as it struck the first hour of the morning. At that lone and ominous sound, the associations of romance and dread, which the fables of our childhood connect with it, rushed coldly and fearfully upon my mind; the damp dews broke out upon my forehead, and the blood curled in my limbs. In that moment I knelt down, and vow'd a frantic and deadly oath—the words of which I would not now dare to repeat—that before three days expired, Hell should no longer be cheated of his prey—I rose—I flung myself on my bed and slept."

I pass on now to another part of the same fearful narrative.

"The scheme to which I resolved upon, was to attach Tyrrell more and more to the gaming table, to be present at his infatuation, to feast my eyes upon the feverish intensity of his suspense—to reduce him step

by step, to the lowest abysses of poverty—to glut my soul with the abjectness and humiliation of his penury—to strip him of all aid, sympathy and friendship—to follow him unseen to his wretched and squalid home—to mark the struggles of the craving nature with the loathing pride—finally, to watch the frame wear, the eye sink, the lip grow livid, and all the terrible and torturing progress of grievous want, to utter starvation—Then, in that last state and not before, I might reveal myself—stand by the hopeless and succourless bed of death—shriek out in the dizzy ear a name, which could treble the horrors of remembrance—snatch from the struggling and agonizing conscience the last plank, the last thread to which, in its madness, it could cling, and blacken the shadows of departing life, by opening to the shuddering sense the threshold of an impatient and horrid Hell.”

Contrasting strongly with this terrible depiction of the malignity of human passions, let us turn to our author's beautiful allusion to another phase of human nature, and the greatest opposite possible to that which I have been describing, viz., the fondness of a mother for her offspring. Here, I may remark, that if Woman, in the plenitude of her grace, beauty, and tenderness, seems as it were, invested with a halo of divinity, and more and speak the incarnation of a Goddess, never does her nature appear in so amiable a light, and so eloquent of that being, who is the universal fountain of all love, the Eternal and the Infinite, than it does in the fondness of a mother for her offspring. The passage to which I allude occurs in the novel of “*Night and Morning*” and I now give it you.

“There was something very touching in the contrast between that wakeful, anxious, forlorn woman, and the slumber of the unconscious boy. And in that moment, what breast upon which the light of Christian pity, of natural affection had ever dawned, would, even supposing the world's judgement were true, have recalled Catherine's reputed error? There is so divine a holiness in the love of a mother, that, no matter how the tie, that binds her to the child, were formed, she becomes, as it were, consecrated and sacred; and the past is forgotten, and the world and its hard verdicts swept away, when that love alone is visible, and the God, who watches over the little one, sheds his smile over the human deputy, in whose tenderness there breathes his own.”

The genius of Bulwer appears to be as well or indeed better conversant with the world in all its varied phases, than any other author that ever appeared before a criticizing public; whether we take the polished conventionalities and graceful hospitalities of aristocratic life, the type of luxury and refinement in their perfection, or descend from Belgrave to Billingsgate. Here we view human nature not only in its most vulgar and uncouth, but, in its most degraded, atrocious, and revolting character, human nature situated in the locality

famous for thieves and abandoned characters of every description, and inhabiting dens of infamy remarkable for their filthy and squalid appearance, which appearance at once deprives the inmates of comfort, self-respect, and the cheerfulness of health. The genius of our novelist appears to be equally at home here, as in the drawing room; by what means, I know not, suffice it to say, that he shows such a knowledge of life in this description, that I think he must have contrived to be personally present in some of the haunts above mentioned. The following description relative to one of those terrible localities, I now give you from the novel of "*Pelham*."

"Johnson did not address me—he was silent and absorbed, and I had therefore full leisure to consider my present situation. Though (thanks to my physical constitution) I am as callous to fear as most men, a few chilling apprehensions certainly flitted across my mind, when I look'd down at the dim and dreary sheds—houses they were not—which were on either side of our path; only here and there, a single lamp shed a sickly light upon the dismal and intersecting lanes, (though lane is too lofty a word) through which our footsteps woke a solitary sound. Sometimes this feeble light was altogether withheld, and I could scarcely catch even the outline of my companion's muscular form. However, he strode on through the darkness, with the mechanical rapidity of one to whom every stone is familiar. I listened eagerly for the sound of the watchman's voice in vain; that note was never heard in those desolate recesses. My ear drank in nothing but the sound of our own footsteps, or the occasional burst of obscene and unholy merriment from some half-closed hovel, where Infamy and Vice were holding revels. Now and then, a wretched thing, in the vilest extreme of want, and loathsomeness and rags, loitered by the unfrequent lamps, and interrupted our progress with solicitations which made my blood run cold. By degrees even these tokens of life ceased, the last lamp was entirely shut from our view, and we were in utter darkness."

After reading to you this narrative relative to a horrid haunt of vice, allow me to read you a pleasing extract from the novel of "*Night and Morning*" relative to our love of adventure in fine summer weather, during that time of life, when Youth sheds her smile over the unwrinkled brow, and gives an elastic buoyancy both to the footstep and the spirits, and when the mind feels a sympathising joyousness in the sunny beam, the verdant meadow, and the silver stream of Nature. This is a season too, when the imagination is the most vivid, and revels in all the romance of enterprise and adventure. Bulwer's description is very beautiful and evidently written *con amore* from his own youthful recollections of roving. The following passage I think a very good specimen of our author's style of episode, viz, the manner in

which he digresses from the thread of his narrative, and gives you something suggested by it, but which might have been left out without interfering with the rest of the story. You must find if you read Bulwer's writings, that they abound with that graceful appendage to which I allude. I now give you the passage.

"Who in his boyhood has not felt the delight of freedom and adventure? to have the world of woods and sward before him—to escape restriction—to lean, for the first time, on his own resources—to rejoice in the wild but manly luxury of independence—to act the Crusoe, and fancy a Friday in every foot print—an island of his own in every field? Yes, in spite of their desolation, their loss, of the melancholy past, of their friendless future, the orphans were happy—happy in their youth—their freedom—their love—their wanderings in the delicious air of the glorious August. Sometimes they came upon knots of reapers, lingering in the shade of the hedgerows over their noon-day meal; and grown sociable by travel, and bold by safety, they joined and partook of the rude fare with the zest of fatigue and youth. Sometimes, too, at night, they saw gleam afar and red by the wood side the fires of gipsy tents. But these, with the superstition derived from old nursery tales, they scrupulously shunned, eyeing them with a mysterious awe! What heavenly twilights belong to this golden month! the air so lucidly serene, as the purple of the clouds fades gradually away, and up soars, broad, round, intense, and luminous, the full moon which belongs to the joyous season! The fields then are greener than in the heats of June or July—they have got back the luxury of a second spring. And still beside the paths of the travellers lingered on the hedges the clustering honeysuckle—the convolvulus glittered in the tangles of the break—the hardy heath-flower smiled on the green waste."

I may remark, after reading to you this highly beautiful and poetic passage, that we must all enter into the spirit of the description, as in youth, that May of our being, the imagination loves to revel in scenes of romance, admiring with the simplicity of its virgin purity the beauties of nature, and e'er it knows the stern realities of life, adorns with its most gorgeous colours the scenes to which it most joyously looks forward. And, I may add, that the love of Nature to which our novelist alludes must be appreciated by all of us, as it is impressed by her own finger on every soul of man, and we feel an instinctive sympathy with the sunny smile and balmy breath of May, when she strews the earth with flowers, and bids every thing that lives rejoice like herself!

Of all novelists, I know of none who excels Bulwer in his thorough knowledge of human nature, and can read with greater accuracy what is written in the innermost recesses of the heart. Guided by the hand of our great and wonderful Parent, the touches by which our novelist depicts her workings in that mystery the mind, are given with a vigour, a

truthfulness, and commanding dignity that almost startle us at the picture! I was once very much struck, when reading one of Bulwer's novels, I think it was "*Earnest Maltravers*," with a passage which shows the author's great knowledge of the heart. I forget the words, and must supply my own, but the idea is the novelist's.

"After any great disaster or misfortune, you should retire to rest for the night, you feel a relief in the thoughts of the forgetfulness of repose and rest, which you experience in the ideal world to which sleep introduces you. Consequently the anticipation of these breaks the force of the misfortune, and you don't feel it ever nearly so much as before, when going to bed. But, mark my words, the bitterest moment is when you awake next morning and begin to think, 'tis then that your grievance bursts upon you in all the stern horrors of naked reality without any alleviation."

The truth of these remarks I have often experienced, and I have no doubt you have all done the same, as the broad characteristics of the feelings with which the Great Parent has inspired her children are the same in every human bosom, and to use the language of Shakespeare, "one touch of nature makes the whole world kin."

I am sorry that time does not allow me to make an extract from our author's last production. It is called "*My Novel*," but I don't mean to say that you must infer from that circumstance that I am the writer of it, (excuse my waggery,) and I can only say that I wish I were. The work in question is a sequel to another of equal merit called "*The Caxtons*," and they both abound with such charming pictures of English rural, and private domestic life, as to have become perhaps the most popular of all Sir Edward's productions. Moreover, the moral tone of both is so very healthy, amiable, and unexceptionable, that the prejudices of the most fastidious have been overcome, and even those who have found great fault with other works of Bulwer's, (though in my opinion without cause,) are obliged to acknowledge themselves as Sir Edward's admirers.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, allow me to direct your attention for a short time to Bulwer as a dramatic writer, after which I must conclude my lecture. The first of the plays of which I shall speak is "*The Lady of Lyons*," which has perhaps been the most usually run upon on the stage, and is most commonly known in the theatrical world. The story is as follows:—

A gardener's son, by name Claude Melnotte, in or near Lyons, is in love with a rich merchant's beautiful daughter,

by name Pauline Deschappelles. The lady in question has refused the addresses of two empty coxcombs called Bauseant and Glavis, who, in order to humble her pride, prevail upon Melnotte to dress himself in splendid attire, and disguise himself as a Prince, in order by false pretences, to win the heart of Pauline. The plot at first answers their expectations; the addresses of the gardener's son are received, and the marriage ceremony is celebrated. The bridal party on their marriage jaunt put up at an inn near Lyons, and afterwards retire to Melnotte's humble cottage. The mistake is here disclosed to Pauline, as the farce can no longer be kept up, on account of the very poor and unpretending appearance of Melnotte's dwelling. Pauline is, as you may well suppose, dreadfully indignant at the trick which has been played upon her, and is in an agony of despair and anguish! When the bridegroom has time to reflect upon what he has done, being on the main an honest and high-minded youth, through pity for the lady, who has been so unfairly entangled, he agrees to renounce his claim upon her as her husband, and obtain a divorce from the contract, on the ground that the marriage was illegal, fraud and false representations having been used. Next day, the relations of the lady come to the cottage, and are, as you may well suppose, in a dreadful state of excitement at the affair. They are, however, comforted by Claude Melnotte, who tells them of the honourable amends he intends making, but at the same time expressing along with his contrition an unfeigned love and admiration of the lady. Shortly afterwards, the hero of our tale disappears, and is not seen again for years. In the meantime, he enters the French army, then fighting against the Austrians in Italy; he greatly distinguishes himself, especially at the battle of Lodi, and rises to the rank of a Colonel, assuming the name of Morier. He now returns home, and again claims the hand of Pauline, who had during his absence maintained a great feeling of respect and attachment towards him. At first, she is in a great state of doubt and distraction, as, although she loves none except Melnotte, yet she is pestered by her father to marry Bauseant, he being very rich, and having promised, if his suit is successful, to assist him, being then in great pecuniary difficulty. However Melnotte, on learning the cause of Pauline's demur, having himself become rich, immediately offers to pay her father's debts, and not only gains the hand

of Pauline, but does so with the hearty concurrence of her family.

I shall now, with your kind permission, direct your attention to the principal scenes and master-strokes of the play. One of the most amusing scenes is the first of the second act, when all the principal characters have an interview, soon after the trick has been commenced. The mother and cousin of the bride show great fulsomeness and cringing towards the Prince, whom they take Melnotte to be, at the same time show the most unbounded contempt for the gardener's son, not only as regards his personal appearance, but also his verses, which they decri as execrable, and not to be compared with the Prince's, little thinking that those two persons are one and the same ! Thus, how often it happens, that when a person is in power, and surrounded by the paraphernalia of wealth and greatness, people of little moral principle make up to him, and extol him, showing the truth of Boileau's remark "*Quiconque est riche, est tout !*" Melnotte, by way of playing a prank upon Bauseaut and Glavis, gives Pauline a splendid gold snuff box which belonged to the first, and a beautiful ring which belonged to the second, these articles being part of the finery that the two had lent Melnotte to practise his imposture with, and having attracted the admiration of his dupe. This part of the story is very amusing, the owners of the property in question being very angry at their things being given away, but the only remark that Melnotte makes is "Fie, gentlemen, a prince must be generous." In the same scene, Damas, a relation of the bride, half suspects that the pretended prince is not the Prince of Como, or an Italian at all, and tries him in the language of the country. Claude is unable to answer him, but cleverly avoids the scrape into which he is so likely to fall, by observing that he does not understand Italian the way that Damas speaks it. One of the most celebrated passages in the drama is one in which Claude describes to Pauline the splendour and beautiful situation of his pretended palace near the lake of Como. The passage is eminently beautiful and poetic, and the language well worthy of the theme. I may remark that nowhere is nature so splendid in her luxuriance and her beauty as in Italy. There is so peculiar a softness and balminess in the air, and so intense a depth of blue in the sky, that to use the words of Madame de Stael in her "*Corinne*" "the mind becomes intoxicated with nature." The passage referred to is as follows :—

" A palace lifting to eternal summer
 Its marble walls, from out a glossy bower
 Of coolest foliage musical with birds,
 Whose songs should syllable thy name ! At noon
 We'd set beneath the arching vines, and wonder
 Why Earth could be unhappy, while the Heavens
 Still left us youth and love ; we'd read no books
 That were not tales of love, that we might smile
 To think how poorly eloquence of words
 Translates the poetry of hearts like ours !
 And when night came, amidst the breathless heavens
 We'd guess what star should be our home when love
 Becomes immortal ; while the perfumed light
 Stole through the mists of alabaster lamps,
 And every air was heavy with the sighs
 Of orange groves, and music from sweet lutes,
 And murmurs of low fountains that gush forth
 I' the midst of roses ! Dost thou like the picture ? "

After reading to you this eloquent passage, I shall conclude my remarks on the *Lady of Lyons* by calling your attention to the following passage from the first scene of the 4th Act. I may remark that Pauline had been followed to her humble abode in Melnotte's cottage by Bauseant, in order to press his own claim as a suitor, knowing as well as Claude that the present marriage was not binding, and thinking the present crisis a favourable opportunity. Pauline indignantly refuses him, and commands him to leave the house, in language beautiful and eloquent ; these are the words :—

"Sir, leave the house—it is humble : but a husband's roof, however lowly, becomes in the eyes of God and man the temple of a wife's honour !"

Is not the language here forcible, and is not the sentiment dignified and noble ? How true it is that the human mind is of the same value under all circumstances and conditions, and the humble roof that shelters virtue and independence is more consecrated by its inmates, than the most costly palace that harbours a tyrant ! What but this dignified sentiment, the offspring of honesty and worth, has immortalized the poetry of Burns, and what but its echo awakens a sympathetic response in the bosom of the poor, though independent Scottish peasant ?

And now I beg to direct your attention to the play of "*Richelieu, or the Conspiracy*." The plot is as follows : a conspiracy is formed against Cardinal Richelieu, the celebrated Prime Minister of Louis 13th King of France, by the Duke of Orleans and others. The hero of the story is Adrian de Mauprat, who is in love with Julie the Cardinal's ward, and is in a great

state of doubt between serving the interests of the conspirators, and the Cardinal. After an interview with the latter, who, thinking him a likely man to serve his purposes against those concerned in the faction, consents to let him marry Julie, to whom he soon afterwards becomes united, he for a short time espouses Richelieu's cause against the conspirators. However, the King having fallen in love with Julie, the conspirators persuade De Mauprat to go over to their side, alleging as a reason that the Cardinal all the time is serving the interests of the King, and that the marriage with Julie was only a sham one, and solemnized to vex him, viz., De Mauprat, who for a long time had been Richelieu's enemy. The conspirators meet at the house of Marion de Lorme, mistress to Orleans, but a confidant of the Cardinal, and who secretly has an interview with the latter, and informs him of the plot which is not only meant to take his life, but also to place the Duke de Buillon, a Spaniard, upon the throne of France. She informs him also that she had promised the conspirators to send a secret dispatch to the above, by the hands of some trustworthy person, and that person she desires Richelieu to appoint, in order to frustrate their designs. The Cardinal accordingly sends his attendant Francois, who follows Marion in disguise in order to receive the packet. He obtains it, but just as he is coming away with it in triumph, a man in armour wrests it from him, and the scheme for the time fails. Shortly afterwards, De Mauprat in disguise enters Richelieu's apartment for the purpose of taxing him with his supposed cunning and atrocious conduct, and I suppose most likely to kill him also, thinking that the Cardinal's apparent leaning towards him was all a sham, as he had been told by the conspirators. However, Richelieu soon undeceives him, and shows him that he has been made the dupe of the conspirators, and Baradas, who is himself in love with Julie, and wishes by cunningly using De Mauprat as his tool in the plot to cause his life to be forfeited, and thus clear the way for his own suit. Then Baradas having killed both the King and Richelieu, and by that means having done away with all obstacles, would find nothing to impede the progress of his suit. De Mauprat, being now entirely reconciled to the Cardinal, tells him of the plot meditated against his life, and the words are hardly spoken before the conspirators rush into the room, headed by Huguet, who although formerly a spy in the Cardinal's service, had now joined the faction. No time must now be lost;

M. Mauprat points to the Cardinal who is apparently dead, lying on a bed, and tells the assassins that he, viz., De Mauprat has strangled him in his sleep, a very good scheme for deceiving them. Hugnet, the first of the conspirators who entered the room, relates the account of Richelieu's death to Baradas and De Beringhen, who followed, he believing De Mauprat's statement to be true. The two in question cause both Huguet and De Mauprat to be arrested on a charge of murdering the Cardinal, wishing in order to serve their own designs, to make away with both of them. In the meantime Francois, in order to prove the conspiracy, being anxious to obtain the packet for the Cardinal by means of De Beringhen, who knows not that he is a spy, gets admission to Huguet's prison, and obtains it by force from De Beringhen. Now this last had also obtained the packet equally by force from Huguet, who I suppose wished to keep it in order to clear himself from any charge of being more guilty in the matter than the others. Richelieu now revives from his apparent death, and the packet is delivered into his hands. Louis gives him all power to punish the assassins, and they are all either banished or put to death. De Mauprat again wins the hand of Julie, and receives the Cardinal's benediction.

The character of Richelieu is beautifully portrayed by the dramatist, and its greatness well sustained throughout the play. He is as regards the body but an infirm old man, but there is an indomitable spirit within, which shines forth with a brilliancy that gives a majesty to the wreck it illumines! Though at that great age, when in most men second childhood commences, and the advance-guard of the grave already make their appearance, yet the commanding intellect still is preeminent, accompanied by a proud resolution and consciousness of his own greatness, the leading principle of action being the love of France, for the sake of which he had devoted all the energies of his life. I may remark, that all who have seen Mr. Macready in the character of Richelieu must have witnessed a very striking illustration of what I am saying; they have seen the immortal spirit struggling with the decay of nature, and then as if in contempt of perishable matter getting an electrifying victory! One of the finest scenes in the play is the 1st of Act 4th. The King had at the instigation of the conspirators, and I suppose to serve his own end in obtaining Julie, signed the writ for De Mauprat's death, the last mentioned having to suit emergencies confessed to having murdered Richelieu. However, the Cardinal

soon appears in *propria persona*, proving of course the fallacy of the supposition that he is dead. Louis declines listening to him, as I suppose De Mauprat's death was an object to him, and he had the plea of saying that at all events murder was *intended*, if not *perpetrated*. This refusal Richelieu seems to construe into a decline of his own power, hitherto Louis having always yielded to him, and allowed his word to be sovereign sway. The passage I am about to quote to you is the answer the Cardinal gives the King, when the latter threatens his power and refuses to spare De Mauprat's life. It is a very good specimen of the expression of his sense of the commanding greatness with which he is invested. The King says,

"Tush! my Lord,
The old contrivance : ever does your wit
Invent assassins, that ambition may
Slay rivals.

RICHELIEU.

Rivals, Sire, in what ?
Service to France? I have none! Lives the man
Whom Europe, paled before your glory, deems
Rival to Armand Richelieu ?

LOUIS.

What! so haughty!
Remember, he who made, can unmake."

RICHELIEU.

Never!
Never! Your anger can recall your trust,
Annul my office, spoil me of my lands,
Rifle my coffers,—but my name—my deeds;
Are royal in a land beyond your sceptre!
Pass sentence on me, if you will; from Kings,
Lo! I appeal to time!"

You cannot fail to be struck with the dignity and electrifying greatness of the Cardinal's responses to the King in the dialogue I have just described. And I would now ask, what gives true grandeur and that royalty of which Richelieu speaks to the character? Why, its deeds. The Cardinal might have been imprisoned by the King, and all his goods confiscated, but his acts were immortal, and would live beyond the grave and time. I may add, that however humble the lot of any individual, he can in a manner make himself great, and shed over himself a lustre, the memory of which will never die in the minds of some; I mean acts of kindness and of mercy, which last can make the lowliest

temple of the immortal mind a dignified and royal sanctuary, consecrated by its approach, however faint, to the greatness of the Infinite himself! Who does not know the touching and beautiful story of Sir Philip Sydney, who when mortally wounded at the battle of Zutphen, and about to drink a cup of water, which had with great difficulty been procured for him, gave the same to a poor dying soldier with these words, "Thy necessity is greater than mine."? That act and those words will never die!

I shall now read you a passage from a succeeding scene, in which Julie in conjugal tenderness entreats Richelieu to obtain De Mauprat's pardon, and mentions the Cardinal's great power over the King, as a pledge of his success, not being aware of the decay of his strength. The answer which Richelieu gives her is remarkable for its laconic and telling power, and the enunciation of it by Macready is one of the principal master-strokes of that celebrated actor. I now give you the passage.

JULIE.

"O, mercy! mercy!
Save him, restore him, father! Art thou not
The Cardinal—King? the Lord of life and death—
Beneath whose light, as deeps beneath the moon,
The solemn tides of Empire ebb and flow?—
Art thou not Richelieu?"

RICHELIEU.

Yesterday I was!—
To day, a very weak old man!—To morrow,
I know not what!"

One of the most celebrated scenes in the Drama is the last. The packet having been obtained by Francois in the manner before related, and delivered to Richelieu, the King's mind is undeceived, and the plot against both himself and the Cardinal is disclosed. He immediately reinstates Richelieu in his favour, and again confers on him all the power he formerly possessed. The conspirators are mostly sentenced to banishment for life, and De Mauprat and Julie joining hands receive the Cardinal's blessing as being a newly married couple. Nothing can be more impressive and magnificent, than the manner in which Richelieu, after he receives the packet, although in the last stage of bodily weakness, and on the confines of the grave, starts up from the very verge of the tomb, and assumes all that dignity and commanding majesty which formerly belonged to him. His

appearance at that critical moment may be compared to the sudden blaze of a taper dying in the socket, a blaze which fills the beholder with amazement!

And now, ladies and gentlemen, I must draw my remarks on the works of this great novelist to a conclusion. Suffice it to say, that I consider him the greatest master that Great Britain ever produced; to display not only the grace and beauty, but the commanding dignity of that language which was once graced by an Addison or a Johnson, and whose accents are spoken commensurately with the extent of an empire which reaches to almost every region of the habitable globe.

I may mention here by the way that I am pleased to see the proud position in which only last January, Bulwer was placed by the people of Glasgow, who installed him as Lord Rector of their University, and I may also mention that I had the honour of being present at the inauguration dinner, and of hearing the very eloquent address Sir Edward made on the occasion.

But to return more immediately to our subject, what Byron was as a poet, Bulwer is as a novelist, with this difference, that the powers of the latter not only comprehend those of the former, but are much more varied in their extent. Bulwer is a poet in the true sense of the word, like the bard of Newstead, awing the mind by his images of sublimity, and charming us with those of grace, while guided by the Great Mother he gives us with his pencil such great and transcendent touches of nature, as awaken in every member of the human family the sympathy of his conscience! But I think you must agree with me that the range of his mind is greater than that of Byron, and displays much more of that philosophic spirit which characterizes the writings of Milton and Wordsworth. I may also add, that I cannot but think that in writers of a certain class, whose strokes are of a bold and magnificent character, there is a sort of intellectual pride and vanity inseparable from their works; they know and feel their own greatness, and wish to give the world the benefit of it. What for instance but this feeling would operate in Byron's mind, when he wrote "*The Corsair*"? Is not the vigour of almost every line of that noble poem instinct with a sense of the author's greatness, and are not those electrifying displays of power which it contains, stamped with that love of applause to which I allude? The same may be said of Campbell in his "*Pleasures of Hope*." Do not those bursts

of heroic feeling in the poem, which take us by surprise like a clap of thunder, evince the profession of the same feelings on the part of the author? And, if these remarks apply to the writers above mentioned, they apply in an equal, if not greater degree, to Bulwer, whose dignified descriptions are buoyant with the feeling. How very much the play of "*Richelieu*" bears me out in what I say? There is something in the majestic bearing of the aged Cardinal, and in the commanding eloquence by which he rivets the attention and the will, something I say akin to the very feeling which seems to actuate the dramatist himself. Bulwer thus appears to me to be appropriating to himself as regards his genius what Richelieu claims as his due for the greatness of his character, and the reader feels that what the Cardinal says of himself, the Dramatist all the while is eloquently gaining from the sympathy of the public. Thus is Genius invested with a halo of Royalty, and its achievements, by a sort of intellectual photography, are permanently stamped in the remembrance of ages! And now, allow me to say, that since the appearance of the author of *Waverley*, no other writer has risen above the literary horizon, whose works have been translated into so many Continental languages, and of whom England may be so justly proud, as Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton.

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